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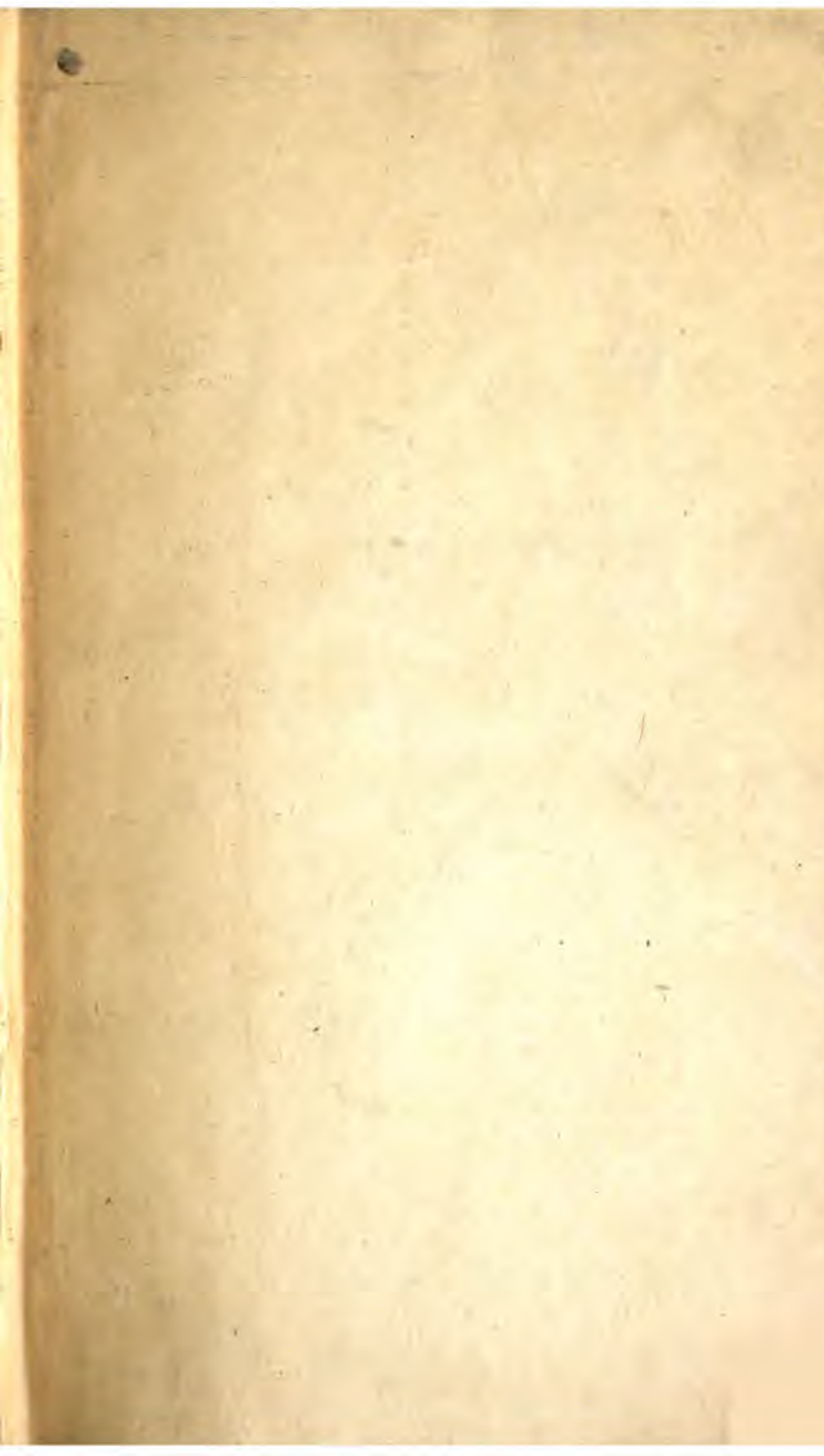
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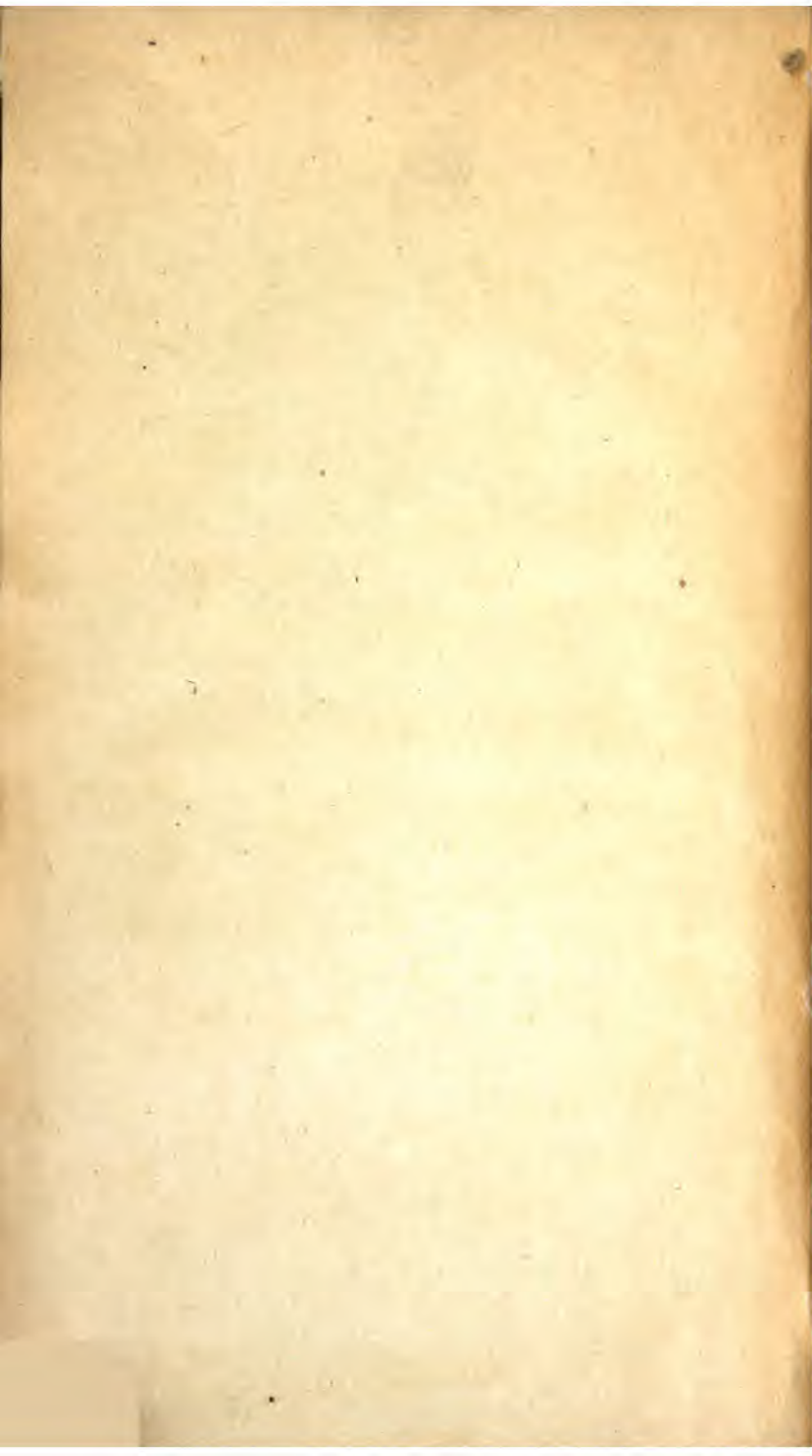
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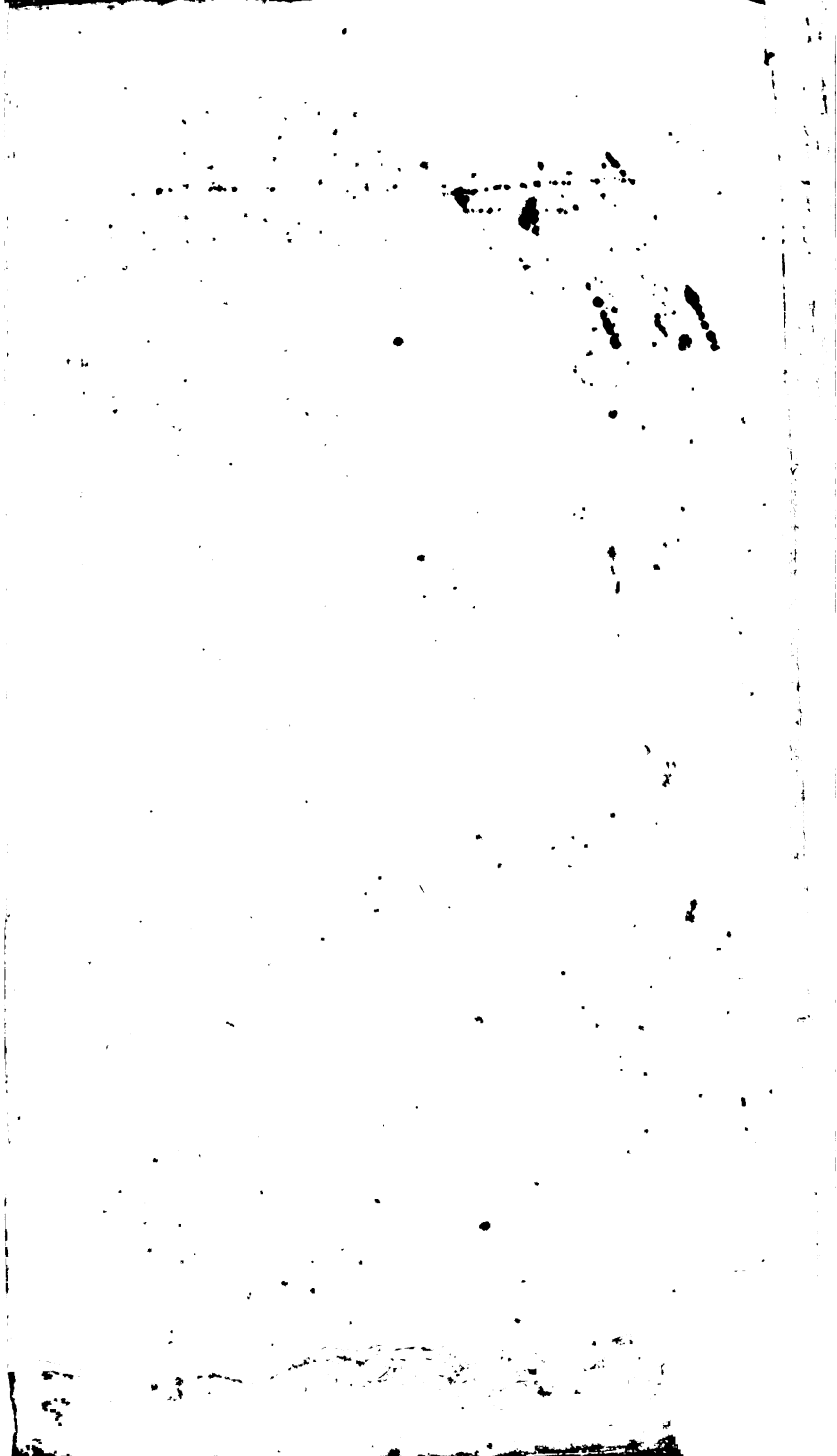
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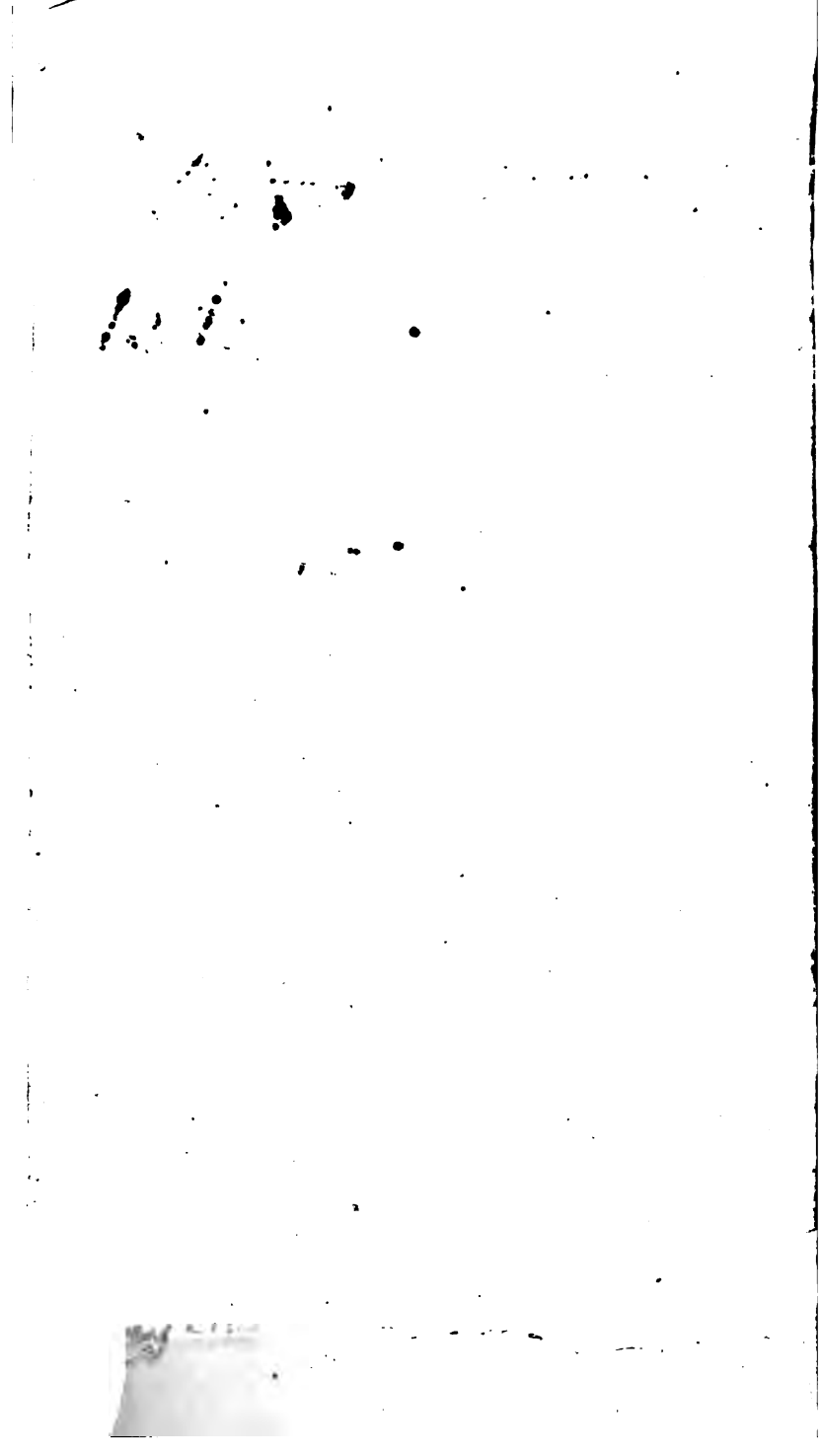


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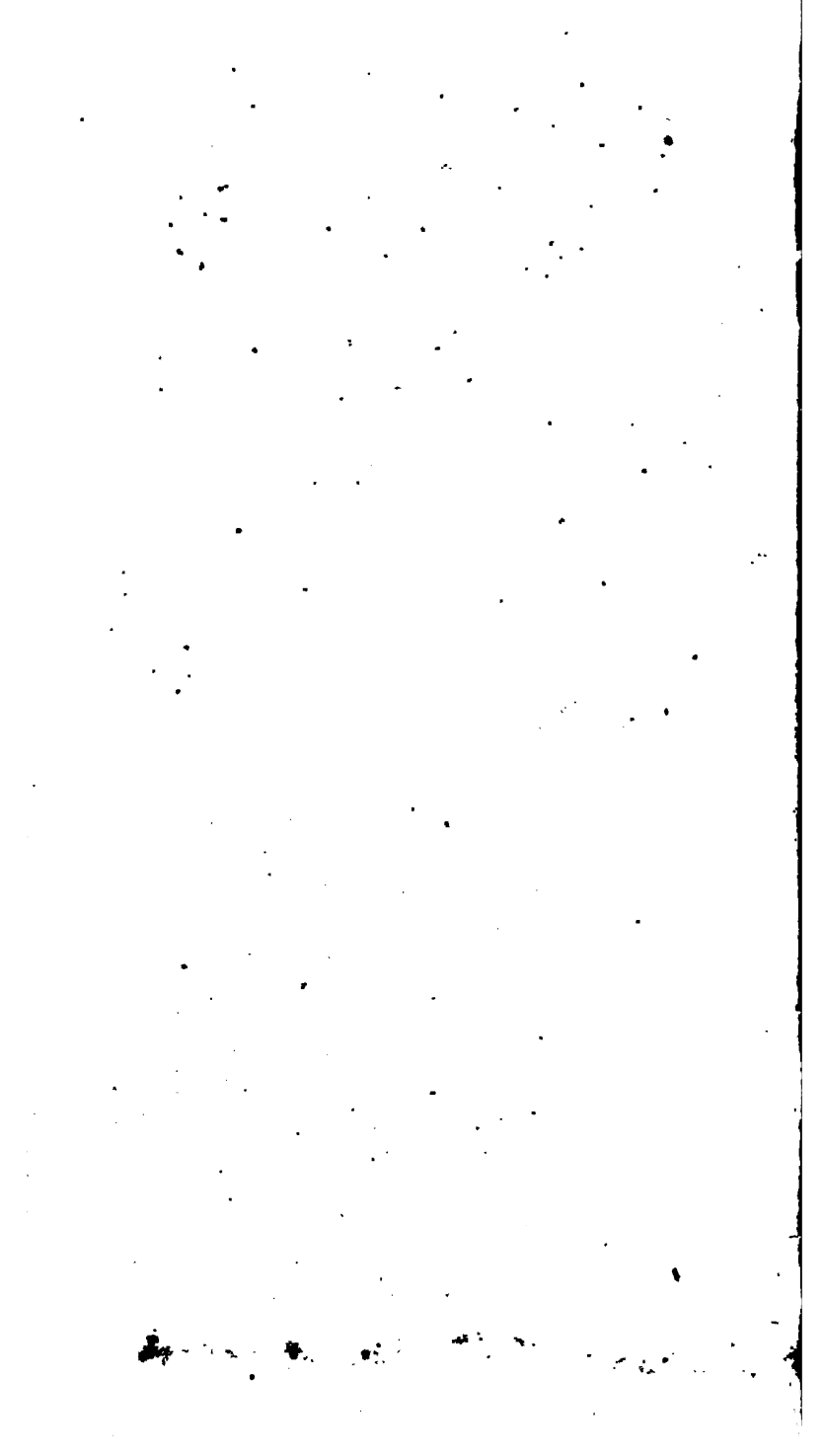












YES AND NO:

A TALE OF THE DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MATILDA."

Margaret of Anjou.

Che se no nel capo mi tenziona.

DANTE.

At war 'twixt will and will not.

SHAKESPEARE.

TWO VOLUMES. *in One*

VOL. I.

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Porcellian Club

Normanby, Constantine Henry

Phippo, 1st marquis of,

3980

PREFACE.

THERE are two different charges to which the Author of a work like the following may expect to be subject—either that he has copied too closely from other fictions, or that he has sketched too pointedly from individual nature. To one of these he may inadvertently have rendered himself liable by seeing much of men; to the other, by reading little of novels.

To the accusation of plagiarism, if urged, the Author can only plead the conscious innocence of any such intention: to the imputation of personality, unless well supported, he would be unwilling to attempt a serious answer; fearing that, in so doing, he might justly be charged with “the puff indirect,” in supposing his characters so well drawn, as to convey to any one the notion of individual identity. But for this, however, he could most sincerely protest, that he is not aware of any intentional resemblance in any one character or passage.

It would be certainly flattering if the reader of a work like this should leave it with a general impression, that similar persons in such circumstances, either have, or would have acted in a similar manner; but the Author is in this instance no more conscious that they

have done so already, than that they will do so hereafter; and has just as much intention to be prophetic as to be personal.

The writer of the following pages owns, with gratitude, that the unexpected favour shown to his former little production, was the parent of the present; but he is aware, at the same time, that this is not a birth to boast of—that popularity is no inheritance; but, on the contrary, as was once said by perhaps the only living writer who never could have had occasion to apply it to himself: “The public will expect the new work to be ten times better than its predecessor; the author will expect that it should be ten times more popular; and it is a hundred to ten that both are disappointed.” This is no doubt generally true; and one may at least imitate, in the humility of one’s anticipations, him who is, in every other respect, inimitable.

YES AND NO.

CHAPTER I.

From infancy
They have convers'd, and spent their hours together;
And though the one hath been an idle truant,
Omitting the sweet benefit of time;

Yet hath the other
Made use and fair advantage of his days.
His years are young, but his experience old;
His head unmellow'd, but his judgment ripe;
He is complete in feature and in mind,
With all good grace, to grace a gentleman.

SHAKESPEARE.

“ And bring wax candles,” said the tallest and apparently the youngest of the two travellers, who had just alighted from that almost obsolete mode of conveyance, a hack post-chaise, at the door of a small but celebrated country inn, on one of the great posting roads of England.

There was nothing in the mode of this arrival which had called for particular care of the new comers from any of the busy inmates of the inn, nor had it therefore broken in upon their regular routine of bustling inattention.

One of the travellers had thrown himself upon a most uninviting sofa, and if his present position could for a moment have been mistaken for repose, it afforded the most conclusive evidence of the dislocating dis-

comforts of the hack chaise, after which it was considered a welcome change.

His companion, (the tall gentleman mentioned above,) continued pacing the small apartment to stretch his legs, an unnecessary task, as, compass-like, two strides measured its limits backwards and forwards.

Upon the next appearance of a waiter, loaded with writing-boxes, dressing-cases, &c., he repeated his former order in a more authoritative tone—"Take away these," (with a contemptuous intonation,) "and bring wax candles." This order evidently excited the attention of the waiter towards him who gave it; the idea of a hack post-chaise being generally connected in the mind of the knight of the napkin with such gregarious animals as little boys going to school with a single guinea for pocket-money, or briefless barristers going the circuit without the remotest hope even of that single guinea. Hastening to execute the first part of the command, the scrutiny which he still continued of him from whom he received it, prevented that perpendicular precision which could alone render the removal of the culprit "mutton-fats;" perfectly inoffensive. And "Boots," laden with portmanteaus and travelling-bags, meeting them on the threshold of the door, the gentle zephyrs by which he was accompanied, caused their sudden extinction, and carried back their odour as far as the upturned nostrils of the gentleman on the sofa, who had hitherto taken no part in the arrangement.

"So like you, Germain!" he exclaimed, as he started up.

"What's like me," replied the other, laughing, "an awkward waiter, or a nasty smell?"

"No—that restless vanity which gives you such an unhealthy craving for the good word of all alike who cross your path, however unimportant or worthless their opinion may be. You could not bear that even in an inn, you should be confounded with the common herd, and were impatient to buy distinction at the

price of a pair of wax candles. This is what is so like you—, seeking the bubble reputation even in a *waiter's* mouth.' ”

This tirade was borne by the other with an imperturbable placidity, which habitual experience of the like must have joined with constitutional good-humour to produce.

“My dear Oakley,” he replied, “do for once drop the cynic this last night; remember, though constant fellowship has given you the right to say whatever you please to me, that our complete separation is about to take away your power of doing so—and I would fain hope that some little regret at what the future will deprive you of, might soften the exercise of the privilege the past has given you.”

He paused a moment; and Oakley, who really liked him better than any one else in the world, seeming silenced by this appeal, and not showing any inclination to resume his attack, Germain continued:—

“Besides, I really don't see how the no very uncommon peculiarity of preferring wax candles to tallow, should subject one to have one's whole character dissected.”

“Germain,” resumed Oakley, quietly, but almost solemnly, “you have alluded to our long fellowship through boyhood and youth: you are right in having done so, for the kindly feelings which that has ripened, will, I trust, long survive our present separation; when, had it been the kindred ties of cousinship alone which coupled our names, the black coat on the back of the one, for the death of the other, would probably have first reminded the survivor that the deceased had ever existed. For as different as our characters, are likely to be our pursuits. Indeed, so strange to me seem all professions of regard, that I may as well resume a tone of reproof, or you will already be unable to recognise your old friend. But call it by what name you like, it is sincere regard for you which induces me to tell you, once again, Germain, that you

have a most unhappy facility of character which will lead you to spend your fortune in acquiring things you don't want, and waste your time in doing things you don't like; and that, in over anxiety for other people's approbation, you will soon forfeit your own."

"However I may feel convinced I am in the right, I never could get the better of the argument with you: perhaps that very quality which you call facility, (meaning weakness,) and which I call candour, predisposes me whilst I am listening to you, to acknowledge there is some truth in what you are saying, and your firmness of character which some might mistake for obstinacy, prevents your ever yielding a tittle. But I will put it fairly to you, whether any one would have supposed the sentiments you have just uttered, to be those of a young man of one-and-twenty, and whether you think it was any advantage at that age to have acquired the character you did last month at Paris, where, as we were always seen together, they compared us to English summer weather. I was the smiling sunshiny morning, and you were the cold cloudy evening that followed."

"There," interrupted Oakley, "that is what I complain of: it is never your own opinion upon any subject. What people said at Paris you repeat. But that can make no impression upon me, though it is all in confirmation of my argument that it does but too much upon you." And as he said this, he began stirring the fire violently, perhaps instinctively, at the mention of an English summer's evening, for it was the 10th of August, and the weather was truly national.

"There," said Germain, "as you have interrupted me, I must interrupt you. Look! you have put out the fire with your violence; that is what I complain that you do in society, which you enter, as stiff and as cold as a poker, and attempt to carry all by storm. Now I should have insinuated myself gently, and have soon been received with reviving warmth, and par-

taken of its influence. Much as you know, you have yet to learn the magic of manner."

"The gilding that makes falsehood and folly pass current," muttered Oakley, as the entrance of the landlady herself with the first dish prevented further reply. This unusual condescension on the part of the portly dame towards travellers in a chatter-box, (as a *post-chaise* is denominated by its familiars,) was entirely produced by that order of Germain's which had originated the late discussson between himself and his friend. They had at first been considered as common-place guests, every day-sort of customers, but the wax candles threw a new light upon their characters; and as soon as it was promulgated in the bar that the gentlemen in "*the Sun*" had asked for wax lights, then the possibility that they might be greater men than had been at first supposed, seemed to break at once on the whole establishment. The landlady, even at the sacrifice of her *papillottes*, prepared to head the enlivening procession. The landlord looked out for one of the illegitimate offspring, born of the clandestine connexion of sloe-juice and raspberry vinegar, in hopes that claret would next be asked for, and the waiter prepared to throw away a random shot or two of "my Lord," and "your lordship," which he thought could do no harm, whether they hit the right mark or not. The visits of the landlord and landlady were "few and far between," and could not be felt as interruptions, but the waiter seemed determined, if possible, to gratify his curiosity at the expense of the patience of its objects. Nothing could get him out of the room.

In the mean time, our travellers found occupation enough before them to prevent their unbroken silence from being irksome. But when in despair at their taciturnity, the waiter at length took his leave, Germain broke out.

"It may be your taste to go through life as if every

man's hand was against you, and yours equally against every man; but I don't see how it can ever be a reproach to any one to be able hereafter to say, 'I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people.'"

"What an accidentally apt quotation!" retorted Oakley. "You may well say 'golden' opinions, for yours are bought, and that with gold. It is such golden opinions that will continue to procure for you attachment like that of Mademoiselle Zephyrine, friendship like that of Monsieur Partout."

Towards the conclusion of Oakley's last sentence, the waiter had returned with a second instalment of mutton chops, followed by an assistant with the reserve of mashed potatoes.

"Hush—hush!" interrupted Germain, who had particular reasons for not wishing the point last mentioned to be argued in open court.

The fact alluded to was this:—Every one knows that there is always a "rage" at Paris, and this—be it hero or man-monkey—book or bonnet—singer or monster—supersedes in its ephemeral existence every other object of attraction. This rage of the moment, when Germain first went to Paris, was Mademoiselle Zephyrine, *première danseuse* at the Grand Opéra. The list of her admirers comprised all, and every degree. As was once said or sung by a witty friend of mine of a celebrated English actress,

" Her flowing curls entangled ears,
Her ancles county members."

It was absolutely necessary for every one who had any pretensions to taste, to be to a certain point in love with her; but Germain, who was always very susceptible, passed this certain point, and committed, accordingly, manifold follies.

At this time, however, a useful and ornamental acquaintance of his, Monsieur Partout, came to his assistance. This convenient friend had previously en-

deavoured to initiate him into the mysteries of the *Salon*, at appreciating the charms of which he had found him rather slow, and he now came to communicate the pleasing intelligence that Zephyrine admired his "maintien" and "air noble," that she had quite a *sentiment* for him, in short, that she preferred him decidedly to all her other admirers. It never occurred to Germain that any part of that decided preference could be at all attributed to the very handsome settlement obscurely hinted at by Partout, and immediately executed by him; till the illusion was dispersed by hearing, one fine morning, that this *fidus Achates*, this faithful friend, had gone bodkin between settlement and sentiment in a *chaise de poste* on a provincial professional trip to Bordeaux. His vanity had been deeply wounded by the ridicule of the whole transaction—it had hastened his departure from Paris, and any allusion to it was still disagreeable.

Oakley and Germain had been (as indeed they have stated for themselves) educated almost like brothers. They were both orphans, and related on the female side, their mothers having been sisters. Germain had inherited an ample, if not splendid, paternal property. Oakley had very great expectations from a maternal uncle; his mother (who had made an imprudent match) being the eldest sister of the two. His present destination was to answer the first summons of his uncle to visit him. He and Germain had just returned from a continental tour, had dropped carriages and couriers at Calais, and it being the dead time of year in London, had passed through that smoky wilderness without stopping. Germain had resisted Oakley's request that he would accompany him to their joint uncle, partly because the old gentleman, whom he had never seen, had the reputation of being a gloomy recluse, and no one had a more instinctive horror than Germain of putting himself in

a situation to be bored; and partly because he could not bear the appearance of interfering with what had always been considered as Oakley's expectations in that quarter: and as the character of this unknown uncle was notoriously capricious, there was no telling what fancies he might take if his two nephews presented themselves together.

Germain's present intention therefore was to take the opportunity of paying a visit to an old private tutor of his, Mr. Dormer, who lived at a petty parsonage, about fifty miles from the spot where he and his friend were about to separate.

It was with this person, and at this parsonage, that he had passed almost the only period during his education, that he had been divided from Oakley. For when they both left school, he not being considered steady enough to be trusted at college so soon as his friend, had therefore been sent to this intermediate purgatory, as at the time he called it—yet afterwards, he found his time pass pleasantly enough there; and whilst he gave to Oakley, as a reason for his visit, that "it was a proper attention to the best old fellow in the world," there came into his calculations of the expediency of it, certain recollections of one Fanny Dormer, whose unbounded admiration of him, during his stay there, had been by no means unwelcome, and had called for a return in kind from him. In short, when he went away, he had felt as if actually in love—and though the time that had intervened, and other impressions which had interposed, had occasionally caused him a little to doubt, upon recollecting some of the boyish couplets in which he used to celebrate her charms, whether there might not be almost as much imagination in the facts, as poetry in the metre, yet the thought of seeing her again caused a pleasing sensation as he called to mind the cheerful eye, the fresh fair skin, and the frequent display of the most brilliantly white teeth in the world,

which followed the ever-ready laugh at the worst of his jokes. And when the friends separated for the night, though the ample justice done to the late supper might have been supposed likely to make disagreeable impressions survive upon a restless pillow, yet it was upon the fancied form, not of Mademoiselle Zephyrine, but of Fanny Dormer, that his eyes closed, as he slowly dropped asleep.

CHAPTER II.

—————There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face :
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

SHAKESPEARE.

The next morning, having despatched an early breakfast, our travellers were becoming rather impatient at the slowness of the progress of the preparations making for their separate departures, when these preparations were suddenly interrupted by an arrival which at once engrossed the attention of the whole establishment, and in a moment collected from hole and corner every one, from the Landlady down to Boots.

It was a post-chaise and four which came clattering up to the door; and the sudden jerk with which it stopped, and the loud cry of "first and second turn out," which followed, rousing its slumbering burden, caused him to raise himself from his *Dormeuse*. Germain recognized the well-known Frederick Fitzalbert, whose acquaintance he had made last winter at Paris. The recognition was speedy and mutual.

"Ah! Germain, my dear fellow," said Fitzalbert, rubbing his eyes and giving a portentous yawn, "how goes it? What, you too, I suppose, have been dreaming of to-morrow.

Germain, to whom to-morrow conveyed no distinct idea, and who had been dreaming of nothing at all, (except, perhaps, a little of Fanny Dormer,) was ra-

ther at a loss for a reply. But Fitzalbert soon enlightened him by continuing—

“Latimer has lent me Peatburn Lodge, and I am to have his moors all to myself—Where are you going to?”

“Why, as I am but just returned from Paris, I have not been able to make any arrangements, and therefore I have not——” stammered Germain, struggling in vain against a sense of shame at not having any moors to shoot upon; when five minutes before, he would as soon have repined at not having the mines of Golconda.

Fitzalbert was one of those whose good word was conceived at once to confer fame in the world of fashion. He had taken a great fancy to Germain at Paris, and in the course of their acquaintance had much amused him with his ever-ready turn for quizzing, the recollection of which talent, however Germain had enjoyed it when applied to others, had left a feeling of fear lest it should be exercised against himself. “I have not got any moors,” he therefore reluctantly acknowledged.

“You had much better come with me then, my dear fellow,” said Fitzalbert; “you shall have a separate beat and a separate bed, and for the rest of the four-and-twenty hours I shall be delighted with your company.”

“I should like it very much,” said Germain, “but I have engaged myself——”

The Rev. Mr. Dormer and Rosedale Rectory were on the threshold of his lips, but he checked himself; for though the mere fact of paying a visit to an old parson might only be reckoned a twaddle, yet he could not bear the idea of the cross-examination which might follow; and it seemed little less than suicide, to run the chance of offering to his satirical friend such a fund for ridicule as “pastoral parsonage,” “private tutor,” “pretty daughter,” and “first love,” compared to which fair game, the loan even of Lord Latimer’s

moors, abundant as they might prove, would afford but poor promise of sport. He therefore left that sentence unfinished, and replied instead; "But I have neither gun nor shooting dress with me."

"Oh! as for that," said Fitzalbert, "I have four guns with me—a Joe, a John, and two Eggs, from which I choose according as I feel in the morning. You may always have any one of the other three; and as to shooting costume, I believe I have got with me all the different dresses of the last five years, most of which have never been worn."

It need hardly be added, that the end of all this was, that Germain was persuaded to alter his destination, and to accompany Fitzalbert to Peatburn Lodge.

"Then, instead of sleeping over another stage," said Fitzalbert, "I will dress here, and be ready for you in a few minutes.—Here, Le Clair, take out all this lumber, and make room for Mr. Germain," added he, opprobriously shovelling out new publications by the dozen, which had hitherto slept quietly, side by side with him, and were now discarded with leaves as yet uncut, and the stiffness of still unbroken boards.

"And what am I to do with all these?" asked Le Clair.

"Leave them here, to be sure; let the chamber-maids study sentiment from the novels, and the post-boys learn geography from the travels—they will have found their proper level at last. But," added he to Germain, "who is that with you?"

"Oakley; you must remember him at Paris."

"What still inseparable! Have you not got quit of him yet? Well, my Frankenstein, I must rid you of *Le Monstre*, as we used to call him."

When Germain went to take leave of Oakley, and to announce to him that he was going grouse-shooting with Fitzalbert—"Grouse-shooting?" asked Oakley;—"well, remember that Fitzalbert is sometimes supposed a—a pretty good long shot at a pigeon, that's all."

Before Germain could reply, it was announced that Fitzalbert was ready, and the cousins took a hasty leave of each other; for though there was an end of their companionship, yet as they had purposed shortly to meet in London, they did not consider this separation as final.

Fitzalbert was one of the best specimens of that sect whose whole soul is centred in self; for, after having well weighed and duly considered the question in all its bearings, provided he was perfectly convinced that no possible inconvenience could arise to himself, he would rather do a good-natured thing than not. And he was even supposed to have derived real satisfaction from the pleasure his doing so gave to others. But most of his actions originated in more compound calculations; for as his objects were never on a grand scale, his acute and calculating character would enable him to foresee advantages to himself from trifles, which a more enlarged mind or a more careless disposition would alike have overlooked. Whether it was from the successful exertion of these qualities, or from some other cause, he was one of those phenomena which puzzle the world,—a man who, without any visible means of subsistence, always continued in the enjoyment of every luxury, whilst distress and ruin were constantly assailing his more wealthy companions. He was constitutionally good-humoured, and he had such a happy knack in conversation, that though he never spared an absent friend, the attack seemed at once unintentional and irresistible—he liked him even whilst he lashed. He could expose his most secret follies with an air of regard, and if the object of the general laugh he had just raised had entered the room at the moment, every one would rather have expected him to join in the jest than to resent it. All his qualities, as an agreeable member of society, were crowned by an easy off-hand manner, which most people avowedly (and probably all) really prefer to the Grandison, Gold-Stick sort of address.

There were many reasons which induced him to take up Germain: first, his society was welcome, as that of a cheerful, agreeable, good-humoured fellow, who, he observed with pleasure, had a great respect for him. In the next place, Germain's fortune, connexions, and personal qualifications, were such as to entitle him to make a great figure in the world when he should come out; and Fitzalbert had experience enough of the world to know that there is an awkward period, when a young man is not quite fledged, when a little attention goes a great way, and is afterwards gratefully remembered. Then perhaps (for it was by no means a trifle beneath his consideration,) he easily perceived that Germain was not much of a sportsman; and as he was going to shoot principally *for book*, and to boast of it afterwards, he had no objection to a foil.

Fitzalbert was in high spirits, and as well inclined to be amusing, as Germain was to be amused. The journey was therefore agreeable to both parties, though of the topics chosen by Fitzalbert, some might in less skilful hands have been tiresome, and others offensive.

He expatiated, in the first place, at very considerable length, upon the peculiar merits of every thing about or belonging to himself,—his carriage, his dogs, and his dress; from this, by an easy transition, he became inquisitive about Germain's private concerns, and those too of a more important description, such as his fortune, his prospects, future plans, &c. But the manner in which he handled these subjects made even his egotism interesting, and gave an appearance of friendly concern to his idle curiosity. These topics being at length exhausted it was natural that, as they approached Peatburn Lodge, Lord and Lady Latimer should be brought upon the tapis. Of them Germain (who, it must be recollected, was not fairly launched into the world) had only heard just enough to make him wish to hear more.

"I must take the very first opportunity to make you acquainted with the Latimers," said Fitzalbert. "Latimer," continued he, "to ninety-nine men in a hundred, would seem one of themselves—that is, he drives a *cab* down the same streets, and sits in the same club-window—but he has, or rather had, qualities of a higher order. His talents are rusted by indolence, and his principles warped by prejudice. It is his misfortune to combine with a naturally generous disposition, an irresistible inclination to be sharp and knowing, which he has acquired in the world. He would lend a friend a thousand pounds, and *do* him out of ten of it. He would give all he has, and take all he can get—an exchange by no means advantageous; and as he himself boasts of his littleness, and no one is equally busy in telling of his liberality, the balance in coin and character is against him; and all this for want of some adequate employment for an active mind."

"And Lady Latimer?" interrupted Germain, to whom this portrait of her lord did not appear particularly attractive.

"Oh, I cannot attempt to describe her, either in person or character; only by way of warning, don't fall in love with her."

"Who was she?" asked Germain, adopting the regular routine of inquiry upon such occasions.

"A Sydenham—Lady Louisa Sydenham. She and Latimer came out the same year, and were both very much admired. In short, they were the talk of the hour. I believe it bored them always to hear their names coupled, and so they married,—a very effectual expedient, for no one *now* ever mentions them together."

"Let me see," said his companion, "Sydenham—then she was a daughter of Lady Flamborough."

"Yes," rejoined Fitzalbert, "her first and hitherto only successful speculation. If any thing could have warned off Latimer, it would have been the dread of

Lady Flamborough's manœuvring. As for Caroline and Jane, I should be sorry to prophesy their fate, pretty girls as they are. By the by, suppose, after all, she was to catch you? You are rather sentimental, I think, and I foresee she will certainly make a dead set at it."

There was something in the tone in which this was said, too nearly approaching to banter, to be perfectly pleasing to Germain. The idea, too, of being "caught," was in itself not flattering, and after all, made it more mortifying. He could not help looking a little disgusted, which being perceived by Fitzalbert, who had no wish to produce any such effect, he turned the conversation.

"I dined, for my sins," he resumed, "with Lady Flamborough yesterday, just before I set out. It was her first culinary attempt since the death of my Lord, and was undertaken in consequence of balls and accidental rencontres being at an end, as a desperate attempt to bring Sir Gregory Greenford to the point before they all separated for the season. Quite a failure; I never shall forget her look of despair, when the feelings of the managing mistress of the house struggled with those of the manœuvring mother, when she perceived that the *petits pâtés*, and *pâtés mêlés* had got next each other, and that Caroline and the baronet had not."

All further discussion of the disasters of the last evening was interrupted by the deepening shades of the present bringing them to their destination.

Peatburn Lodge was situated in a deep glen in the midst of extensive moors. In front, a brook meandered through the meadow, which interposed between a small neglected flower-garden, and the steep banks of the heather-topped hills, the sides of which were scantily clothed with a straggling fir plantation. There was no attempt at a pleasure-ground, for the twenty yards of gravel road that led from the gate of the garden, to the front door, had been carefully raked and

rolled for their arrival. The house was small, and though it had some distinguishing marks of a gentleman's residence, yet it seemed as if it had been promoted from the ranks, and had at some time been a *bonâ fide* cottage.

The whole scene was one, the impression of which must have depended upon the state of the spirits when it was visited. But at present the sun was setting brilliantly, and gave a gaiety to all around, as stepping from their carriages, Germain and Fitzalbert strolled through the long grass which divided the weed-grown plots of the flower-garden, where various rare plants were growing wild, and left to themselves to struggle with briars and brambles for their existence.

"These were Lady Latimer's handy work the year she was married," said Fitzalbert. "Latimer has not seen her since. You probably never heard of an old savage who lives not far from here, Lord Rockington?"

"Only my uncle," said Germain.

"True; so he is—but never mind, uncles I reckon fair game; but as I was saying, Latimer had a law-suit with your uncle about boundaries, and was cast wrongfully, as he says; and though this new limitation was twenty miles off, he said he would as soon shoot fowls in a farm-yard, as come here to be cramped and confined. They talk of the deadly feuds of wild Indians, but for genuine unconquerable hatred, give me country neighbours in this Christian country."

A plain but ample supper, provided by the game-keeper's wife, was here a welcome interruption; and by the help of a most minute examination and trial of all the four guns, they contrived to get through the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER III.

————— Wilt thou hunt?
The hounds shall make the welkin answer them,
And fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth.
SHAKESPEARE.

"WHAT sort of a morning?" said Fitzalbert to Le Clair, as he entered his room at six, the prescribed hour.

"Fine, only rather thick—a sort of fog," was the reply.

"Ay—only heat, it will be a broiling day; so, call Mr. Germain immediately."

"Now for it," said Fitzalbert, rising from the breakfast table, and walking towards the window; "why it can't mean to rain!" he added, in a tone of mingled astonishment and reproach.

But *it* certainly did mean to rain; and any suspense on the subject that it might have maintained was thrown aside, now that it had them perfectly equipped, completely breakfasted, and utterly resourceless at this early hour.

Nor was this the worst; rain alone, if light, might be braved, if heavy, could not last; but it had now acquired a most formidable auxiliary. "The sort of fog," from which Fitzalbert's sanguine expectations had anticipated heat, had already, when they came to the window, enveloped the heather-topped hill opposite. Slowly descending, it wound about the straggling fir plantation; still thickening as it advanced, it gave a gigantic appearance to the cattle browsing on the lower pastures, as for a while they were still in-

distinctly seen—then Lady Latimer's neglected exotics looked more than ever unhappy under its influence; at last, even these were completely obscured, and not an object could be distinguished beyond the fresh marks left by their own recent arrival on the otherwise unbroken surface of the gravel road. Each wheel track was soon a running stream, and every hoof-mark contained water enough to reflect the pattering rain.

Fitzalbert had watched the progress of the storm with a whistle, which Germain was too observant to mistake for indifference, and though he did not care so much for the disappointment himself, yet as he could suggest no adequate topic of consolation, he prudently said nothing.

"Pleasant!" was all that Fitzalbert at length exclaimed, but no word, or words, could have conveyed so much as the look which he alternately cast at an old-fashioned clock which had yet to strike seven, and at the dilapidations of the breakfast-table, which showed that even that resource was numbered with the things that were past.

The horror of this situation was increased by learning, from the most weather-wise of the local authorities, that this was what was called in that part of the country a Sea-fret; and that its usual duration was three days. Lord Latimer's limits were even more circumscribed by the German Ocean on one side, than they were by Lord Rockington on the other; and his marine majesty sometimes proved, as on the present occasion, the most encroaching and intrusive neighbour of the two. It is no drawback upon Fitzalbert's general estimation of his friend, that as he looked round at the book-shelves, he regretted at the moment that he had exchanged for him those discarded tomes of which he had spoken so slightly—and he would gladly have wished him away, to have had the dullest of the productions of the day, the weakest literary bantling that ever dragged out a few weeks' existence, "dieted on

praises, sauced with lies." The few apartments were soon ransacked for resources, but without success. In Lady Latimer's they found a piano-forte, some netting-needles, and a paint-box,—all equally satisfactory! Some neatly bound volumes were seized with avidity, but, alas! they turned out to contain only manuscript music, and water-coloured drawings. In the course of their search, they stumbled into the old game-keeper's own room; here they did find one book between them—it was about half "The whole duty of man," with the first and last leaves torn out, probably for wadding.

"By the by," exclaimed Fitzalbert, his noble countenance lighting up, evidently with a bright thought, "I wonder whether they have any cards in the house let's send for old Coverdale, and ask."

Old Coverdale had been gamekeeper in Lord Latimer's father's time, but as the present Lord had always brought all his shooting establishment from Latimer, he had (though somewhat superannuated) continued him for his negative qualities; for though he could no longer shoot much himself, he would not let any one else shoot at all. Fitzalbert too, having sent his own man with his dogs, was independent of the veteran's somewhat rheumatic assistance.

"Are there any cards in the house?" asked Fitzalbert, as old Coverdale hobbled in.

"Na', there not loik," growled out the old man, who had grown a little Methodistical in his solitude, and had therefore a horror of such abominations.

"But could not you get us a pack?"

"Why, any thing in loife for you, gentlemen; but the gamest shop to find them is Jemmy Macpherson, at Boggleby-Moorside: that's a matter of sax miles, and Smoiler 'll be matched to get there to-day, for he an so canny on his legs as might be, and the road's a webit stoney; a power of steep bank-sides—and Jemmy, I doubt, will na ha' gotten his winter stock of any thing till the first October carrier—neither cards,

nor yet flannel," added he, casting a rueful look at the window, not out of it, for that was no longer possible: and thinking, no doubt, that going for one in such weather would render the other necessary.

This last statement, which showed that Jemmy Macpherson was more famous for the variety of his goods, than for the extent of his stock, prevented their proposing to send any other messenger.

"May be you may foind some'at to whoile away the toime in yon cupboard," said he, opening a closet-door which they had not yet perceived.

"Soho!" exclaimed Fitzalbert, as he prepared to drag out from under a load of lumber a back-gammon-board. "Well! we shall at least have a little chicken-hazard."

A back-gammon-board it certainly was: that it only contained a skeleton regiment of men, signified not for their present purpose. Dice they luckily found, but no box.

"This will be the very thing," said Fitzalbert, taking one of a row of old Sèvre's coffee-cups, which Mrs. Coverdale had arranged on the shelf above; and with this ingenious substitute they set to work, and

Seven's the main!" was alternately shouted with varying fortunes, and increasing stakes, till at the end of the time, Germain rose a winner of four hundred pounds.

"Pigeon-shooting," thought he, "I wish Oakley was here;" and from this moment he had caught the infectuous love of play.

Fitzalbert did not in any way show the slightest annoyance at the result. To be sure, towards the end of the time, he broke six of the coffee cups, but that was very probably an accidental contingency. He seemed in much higher spirits than he had been, and the next morning was rewarded by the weather completely relenting, in spite of the saying. He never shot better in his life, brought home forty-five brace,

and was not a little gratified at Germain only having attained a tithe of his performances.

On the next day, the weather, though not decidedly bad, was rather wild and windy. He proposed an adjournment to a neighbouring watering-place; for he probably preferred to any chance of obscuring his former brilliant achievements, the being able to say, that *in spite* of the weather, which drove him away, *the one* day he was out, he had killed forty-five brace. Germain, who had not been made more fond of shooting by finding his performances so considerably inferior to those of his friend, readily consented.

Soon after their arrival they sought the beach, which was the public promenade, and as usual, covered with those shoals of the productive classes from the inland counties, who annually become amphibious in the autumn, and instead of being pinioned between the counter and the wall, sport themselves between high and low water-mark—naked or clothed—tumbling out of bathing-machines, or donkey-carts—according to the time of tide.

Fitzalbert, part of whose system it was to affect even more than he felt of contempt for all that was not useless, as well as ornamental exclaimed—

“A nation of shop keepers, indeed! but heaven forefend that either cloth or cotton goods should be denied their periodical plunge into the sea; for I swear one can smell the smoke of steam-engines as they pass. Hands off, and a broad walk, is all I bargain for.”

As he said this, Germain felt himself lightly touched on the shoulder, and a woman's voice cried out, laughingly, “Ah! we've caught you at last, Mr. Germain.”

Turning suddenly round, he could not be mistaken in recognizing the form of Fanny Dormer. True, it was not exactly what he had recollected—the bright red and white was there, but it seemed as if the former colour had made undue inroads upon the territory of the latter. The well-rounded form of the

growing girl had, perhaps, somewhat exceeded its former promise in the full-blown woman before him. The brilliancy of the teeth remained unimpaired; but *surely* their ample display had not been always owing to the size of the mouth.

These reflections passed rapidly through Germain's mind, and had probably their effect upon his countenance, though not perceived by Fanny, as she gaily continued—

“Here's my father—his lumbago, which caused our coming here, would have prevented his catching you——”

“So I despatched my Hebe after you,” interrupted a respectable looking middle-aged man, with an intelligent countenance, and a still fresh, florid face, though his nose might be accused of engrossing more than its share of the ruby, the origin of which usurpation might be convivial, but if constitutional, would excite alarm for the future, as to the somewhat unsettled hues of Fanny's complexion.

“How could you play the truant with your old tutor?” continued he; “when we got your letter, we delayed our departure from home, and Fanny had prepared your favourite whipped syllabub for you, for she never forgets any thing,” added the fond father, reciprocating an affectionate glance with his dutiful daughter. “And as you also were coming here, it would have been so handy, for you might have come bodkin with us in the chaise; you have done so before now—do you remember Plateford races?”

“And Wrangleby Sessions Ball?” said Fanny, her bright eyes beaming with undisguised pleasure at the recollection.

“She never forgets any thing, indeed,” thought Germain, with the reviving consciousness of having made rather a fool of himself upon that occasion with the rustic beauty.

“We thought it so kind of you,” rejoined the father, “to recollect your old friends immediately upon

your return to England; and when we talked you over upon the receipt of your letter, Fanny said that she was afraid you would find us rather dull after all the fine people you had been living with. Why so, said I, we have not changed, and this anxiety to see us shows that he is not."

Germain was somewhat touched at the good man's simplicity, and not a little ashamed of being ashamed at the meeting; so he replied, almost earnestly—"But I hope you got my second letter, saying how very sorry I was that it was utterly impossible for me to fulfil my intention of visiting you."

But though his better feelings dictated this excuse, he could not help being annoyed at Fitzalbert's presence. The imperturbable patience with which this gentleman stood all the while, convinced him that he was imbibing food for future ridicule; and he feared, not without reason, that he should come in for his full share. He could not deny that Fanny's appearance afforded not a little food for the gratification of that taste.

"She ought to have known," thought he, "that so small a bonnet must make her face look ten times larger—and why that bright green cloth pelisse, which looks as if it had formed part of the lining of a pew in her father's church?"

In the pauses of the conversation, he had suspiciously watched the movement of his friend's eyes; he observed them fixed on the ground near Miss Dormer's feet. Even in the height of his infatuation, he had occasionally had his misgivings that Fanny Dormer had not a pretty foot; since then his mind had been particularly enlightened on the subject by his trip to Paris, as well as his taste formed during some of his connexions in that capital, to which allusion has been made, as to the best artificial modes of setting off that very attractive part of the person. Great was his horror therefore at seeing the exposure of yawning leather boots, on which Fitzalbert's eyes were rivetted; and

taking a hasty leave of father and daughter, with a promise to call on them, he hurried away.

"Where, in the name of wonder, did you pick up those treats?" asked Fitzalbert.

"Mr. Dormer was the private tutor to whom I was condemned on leaving school," answered Germain.

"And you consoled yourself with studying Ovid's *Art of Love*," said Fitzalbert, with a suppressed sneer.

This was the only comment he made at the time, and it was not till long afterwards that Germain discovered that no part of the foregoing scene had lost in his hands by repetition. Little was he aware that it was his own over-evident morbid sensibility to ridicule which gave the zest to the exposure, and that a more manly indifference would have disarmed even Fitzalbert.

It would be difficult perhaps to define exactly the qualifications which ensure at once, without dispute and as a matter of course, a fixed position in what is called the first society. Birth alone will not do it. Wealth not only will not succeed alone, but is not always an indispensable requisite. Neither personal appearance nor talents will be separately sufficient; yet a fair allowance of the two combined, and a slight infusion of one or both of the other two ingredients, will go far towards establishing a claim to its fellowship. But from whatever source the consciousness of this fixed position in society is derived, it exempts a person from nothing more decidedly, than from that which by some is ignorantly supposed its characteristic—a propensity to cutting a casual acquaintance, on account of his personal appearance, a weakness which arises from a false alarm that the ridicule which attaches to a quiz is catching. Such a person, secure of his own situation,—well-dressed himself, as a matter of course, not of care,—would never imagine that there could be contagion in the cut of a coat or the make of a gown, and therefore would, even in the most

public place, without a moment's uneasiness, interchange common civilities with the veriest quizz that ever adorned a print-shop. But as passports are most examined in frontier towns, it is in the outskirts of fashion that those who there occupy uncertain settlements are most particular about external badges, and can see exclusive merit in their own costume, or mortal offence in that of another. It is those who dwell on what may be called the debateable land of society, who are in most constant dread of inroads from without. It is here that slights are incessantly fancied from above, and intrusion perpetually feared from below.

But independent of the situation of society, there is an age at which fear of ridicule is epidemic. The awkward state, for instance, of having ceased to be a boy, without being universally acknowledged to be a man. From this state Germain was just emerging. This, of course, gave additional terrors to the idea of being quizzed about a private tutor, and may account for a little of the otherwise indefensible sense of shame he felt at the meeting with his former friends.

For there was much to esteem in the character of both father and daughter. Mr. Dormer was an exemplary parish priest, and a kind neighbour to the poor; and if (as he never read but on one side of any political subject, and never heard either discussed) his prejudices had somewhat strengthened in thirty years' utter seclusion, they were at least sincere, and had never served as a stepping-stone to preferment. If he seriously believed that it was the intention of half the government, and one branch of the legislature to establish the Pope at Lambeth, it was an opinion which he shared with many who had more opportunities of knowing better. Whenever the weekly county paper promulgated the news of some fresh attack upon the church, he insisted upon drowning the design in a third bottle of port, and supporting the Protestant con-

stitution while destroying his own. Yet the headache that followed never was known to interfere with the timely composition of the Sunday's sermon.

Fanny Dormer had not escaped the defects almost inseparable from a masculine education. Not only she was learned, and was not accomplished, but in her slightest movement, almost in her every word, it was evident that woman's care had been wanting. In the innocence of her heart, she said all that her high spirits dictated; and in the vigour of her fine active person, she took every kind of manly exercise that youth and health prompted. The little defects in her appearance have been noted by Germain; but if it must be owned that she could not make a decent gown for herself, she made plenty of flannel-petticoats for the poor—and, whatever fault might be found with the cut of her outward garment, it still covered one of the kindest hearts that ever breathed.

From this character of Mr. and Miss Dormer, it may be expected that as Germain had now seen more of the world, he might find the one less a model for imitation—and the other, less an object of attraction than he had done; but that he should expect to derive less instruction from the society of the father, or pleasure in the company of the daughter, was no excuse for his conduct at the meeting; and though his facility of character, and anxiety to appear well in the world, may have done much in making him dread the ridicule of Fitzalbert, yet his youth is the best plea in his palliation. At thirty, his conduct would have been inexcusable; for, as in the West Indies, the constant dread of the yellow fever is considered a strong symptom that it is lurking in the constitution, so an incessant fear of being thought vulgar, is a sure sign of innate and inherent vulgarity.

CHAPTER IV.

This from a dying man receive as certain :
When you are liberal of your loves and counsels
Be sure you be not loose ; for those you make friends
And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
Like water from ye, never found again
But where they mean to sink ye.

SHAKESPEARE.

OAKLEY was left preparing to obey the summons of his uncle, Lord Rockington, to pay him a first visit. It has been stated that he had been educated with the idea of great expectations from this quarter, but these were still uncertain, as Lord Rockington was only his uncle on the mother's side, and though he had no nearer relation, the property was entirely in his own power. His character, too, was remarkable for singularity, and his intentions had never been formally announced.

The manner in which Oakley's attendance had now for the first time been required, was in itself strange: he had received a letter at Paris desiring him immediately to proceed to London, where he would hear further. Upon his arrival there, he found another letter, desiring him to present himself at Rockington Castle by four o'clock in the afternoon of a certain day, and on no account to fail in observing the time prescribed. It was to fulfil this injunction that Oakley was now about to pursue his journey.

Lord Rockington's was a name that had once made considerable noise in the political world. His military achievements had in his youth, for a time, even entitled his head to swing on signs at ale-house doors.

But his glories had been suddenly overcast—he had had his reverses, which had caused a reaction of public opinion. Impeachment had been threatened, but not persevered in. His name however was scratched out of the Red Book, and his head painted over on the sign-posts. Disgrace had driven him to seek his present retirement, and his former reputation, as well as his more recent infamy, were speedily alike forgotten in the quick succession which followed of greater events, and perhaps greater men. Few ever inquired whether he was physically, as well as politically dead. All know how soon the attention of the world is turned, even from characters yet undeveloped, and events yet unravelled; and here was a man whom the public voice had alternately praised and vituperated, each in its highest degree. What more could be made of him? Indeed, for many years, Lord Rockington's name was never mentioned, even in those circles where it had once been "familiar in their mouths as household words," save when now and then it was brought on the *tapis* incidentally at Lord Latimer's, as that of a crabbed old curmudgeon who spoilt sport on the 12th of August.

When Oakley arrived at the last stage on the main road, from whence he was to turn off to his uncle's, great indeed was the wonderment expressed at his ordering horses for Rockington Castle; it could not have caused more confusion in the whole stable-establishment, if he had desired to be driven to the North Pole.

"Why, is not this Lord Rockington's post town?" inquired Oakley of the landlord.

"Yes, Sir, but it's a matter of twenty miles off," answered mine host, "and as to letters, why for years that I have been post master, there has never come a single one for him, nor have I so much as seen the like of his frank."

After extracting from the tap-room a drunken ostler, who was reported once to have driven Lord Rocking-

ton's leaders when a lad, and appealing in vain to his recollections on the subject of the road then, and receiving only the uniform answer—"Na, he never gi'ed I a drop of owt when I's gotten them," the stable conclave at length decided, that after Bill had turned out of the main road, down Ruggedrutlane, he must inquire the way.

Accordingly, after Bill had at length succeeded in convincing his puzzled posters that they were not going their regular stage to——, and had made the turning down Ruggedrutlane, constant inquiry was necessary, but not always easy, as after quitting the attractive neighbourhood of the great road, population became thinner, and straggling houses were seen but at considerable intervals. Sometimes their questions were only answered by a stupid stare—at others, by "Rockingham Castle! Na, you munna gang there;" but whenever they succeeded in obtaining a direct answer, the road evidently the most overgrown, and apparently the least frequented, was the one pointed out to them.

Profiting by this hint, when, from no symptoms remaining of neighbouring habitation further verbal inquiries became impossible, Oakley adopted the plan of always taking the turning over which he saw written, "No road this way; trespassers will be punished;" construing, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, this regular warning as a direction-post to Rockington Castle, and the threat which followed into an invitation to choose that path.

As he advanced, it was impossible that Oakley should not be struck with astonishment at the extraordinary appearance of the whole face of the country: that which had once been a well-cultivated estate was now one vast wilderness. The hedges were unclipped; the more vigorous plants, of which they were composed, had shot up into wild over-growth, and now remained dotted about in irregular clumps, appearing like a dwarfish forest wood. The ground, which had

once been tilled to yield its varied and successive produce, now offered, over all its wide extent of surface, only the rank growth of uncropped herbage; and now and then among the trees were seen at intervals the broken remnants of apparently ruined buildings.

As Oakley's progress brought him under one of those, he was at a loss to account for the present state of the dilapidated dwelling, which seemed neither decayed by the mouldering hand of time, nor crushed by the sudden wrath of the elements, nor yet stripped by the spoliation of human hands. It had been rendered utterly uninhabitable; the covering of the roof was scattered around; and beams and rafters, torn from their resting-place, were confusedly leaning against the bared walls.

But in the lower rooms, the yet unbroken state of the casements showed that no wanton mischief had been allowed to intrude upon its deserted state since the hour of its demolition; and that this had not been recent, appeared from the size of two goodly trees, the unchecked growth of which obscured the whole front, and sent their topmast shoots over the broken roof, but when saplings, had, it seemed, lent their supple twigs to form an arbour over the heads of those who had last reposed, where were still left the rotten remains of a worm-eaten bench.

Oakley afterwards learnt, that upon Lord Rockington's first seclusion, the whole of his estate had been laid waste for the purpose merely of stopping to its utmost limits his wanderings, without the chance of his being offended with the sight of a fellow-creature. Extravagant as this may seem, yet solitude was his mania; and though he paid fifteen thousand a-year for it, yet, what is not paid by many to secure the constant presence of the "human face divine?" and none ever sought society with half the eagerness that he shunned it. The preposterous extent too of this sacrifice to a ruling passion, was somewhat diminished by his de-

living thirty thousand a-year from other estates which he never visited.

But though all this may account for the act on the mere ground of self-indulgence, yet must deep disappointment, and consequent misanthropy, have conspired to harden the heart that could without a pang have given the order, and unmoved have beheld its execution; for it was just one of those primitive, secluded spots, where, in proportion as the social sympathies are undeveloped, attachment to the soil is strongest; and the ejectment which left untenanted that one deserted arbour which Oakley had passed, destroyed more endearing ties and more cherished associations, than would have been disturbed by a whole century of improvements in a crowded metropolis.

Now, however, that time had hallowed the work, the effect it had produced was wild and picturesque. The outline of the country was bold and abruptly broken: it had always been one of those rugged regions over which man seems to hold his control but by a feeble tenure; and, in this instance, the moment of his abdication had been quickly followed by the disappearance of any traces of his authority, and Nature, in her wildest garb, had as speedily resumed undivided dominion. Even quickset hedges, those badges of man's superintending presence, had thrown off the rectangular livery of art; and, scattered about in irregular and tangled brakes, beneath the wide-spreading arms of loftier trees, added to the wildness of the scene.

All this harmonized peculiarly with Oakley's existing feelings, and prepared his mind for the events which were to follow. After driving through many miles of this depopulated desert, he arrived at the gate of Rockington Castle. No softening symptoms of return to civilization had marked his approach, it rose upon the sight like a mighty vessel out of the bosom of the troubled waters, and stood in the midst

of the wide waste in solitary grandeur, the only work of man for miles around.

Rockington Castle was an edifice which really deserved its cognomen of Castle, not assumed merely on the strength of latticed windows or a flag-staff, but deriving its title from a period prior to the Conquest, crowned as it then was with the identical turrets which still overhung its eastern summit; and bearing about in different parts the distinguishing marks of each succeeding century except the present; for it had fortunately escaped the mongrel patch-work of modern improvements. With the present day, it seemed to hold no connexion. The shades of mailed knights and warriors of the olden time might have been expected to hover about so congenial a spot, but that it should contain a living modern master, seemed almost incredible.

Oakley's postilion was obliged by main strength to force back the great gate upon its rusty hinges, and he found himself in the grass-grown court-yard at the moment that a deep-toned bell, the first symptoms of inhabitancy, struck the appointed hour for his arrival.

"My Lord has just been asking for you," said a veteran attendant who met him at the door; "it is well you had not arrived too late—he is sadly changed within these two days." With this, he ushered him through a suit of dilapidated rooms.

Oakley (to whom the idea of immediate danger had never suggested itself, from the methodical manner in which his presence had been desired) was not a little shocked at this declaration. The aged attendant left him alone for a minute in a sort of picture-gallery, whilst he proceeded to announce his arrival.

There would have been much for a genealogist, and somewhat for a connoisseur to study in the gallery, which seemed devoted alone to commemorate the martial representatives of the family. There were seen warriors of every age, from the first rudiments of the art of painting, when coats of mail were sketched

with a pencil as hard and as stiff as the substance it depicted. After them appeared a valuable specimen or two of the matchless time of Vandyke; then came a profusion of the flowing periwigs and shining breast-plates of the vain and frivolous age which followed, and which owes its immortality to the colouring of Lely and of Kneller.

One alone was to be seen of a more recent date, which rivetted the attention of Oakley; it was a full-length portrait of his uncle on horseback—he was represented in the prime of manhood, at the moment of victory. As a work of art it had few recommendations, but as a portrait it was perfect; for it conveyed the expression so often experienced, without knowing the person portrayed, of an indisputable likeness. It was an admirable head, surviving even the almost overpowering profusion of daubed canvass with which it was surrounded. True, the horse was wooden, and the landscape woolly. The retiring foe was rather shadowy, and the smoke somewhat substantial, but the countenance atoned for all defects: it was the living man himself, and every muscle told a tale of triumphant pride, and gratified love of glory; and as this must all have been drawn from life at a subsequent period, it was evident that the character of the man had been one in which the habitual indulgence of these feelings had long outlived the moment of their excitement.

Oakley was still gazing intently upon this all but speaking portrait, with a feeling that it was impossible not to acknowledge the superiority that it seemed to claim, and to partake of the enthusiasm that it exhibited, when he was summoned into the presence of the original. The sudden shock of the contrast was appalling. He might have even been prepared to see a person from age and disease wasted in frame, and worn in feature, but not to behold a countenance which had long lost every trace of the action—of that mind which had given life to the picture—nor to find

that a piece of coloured canvas could appear animated by that commanding soul, which no longer inspired the living form where it still lingered.

Lord Rockington had been remarkable for the height of his person, and the stateliness of his deportment; and his emaciated figure now seemed to recover a momentary elasticity, as he half attempted to rise to receive his nephew. A stranger-smile for an instant hovered about his lips—how unlike the conscious curl of proud superiority which marked the mouth of the portrait! A confused and unsettled stare had succeeded to the piercing glance of the fiery eye which had fixed Oakley in that picture, with which he could not help comparing the unhappy object before him.

Lord Rockington addressed his nephew courteously. "Punctuality, I see, has become a practice as well as precept in the world. It is twenty years since I last made an appointment, and I had my own reasons for wishing this not to be broken."

He paused from the exhaustion which followed this first effort, and which seemed so excessive as to confirm the prediction with which he resumed.

"Mr. Oakley, you have faithfully obeyed the summons of a dying man."

Oakley expressed, in reply, an earnest hope that in this he might be deceived.

"Words, worthless words," interrupted Lord Rockington, evidently irritated. "After so long a holiday, must my insulted ear again echo back empty professions before its failing sense is for ever delivered from the sickening sounds of human hypocrisy and falsehood. I am a stranger to you, odious by name, loathsome in person; I have given you no cause to hope my life. You are my heir. Have I given you none to wish my death?"

Oakley would have endeavoured to sooth him, and to check these wayward ebullitions of a distempered mind; but Lord Rockington, assuming more composure, motioned him to silence.

"I have much to tell, and little time to tell it in. You doubt my accuracy in predicting the impending dissolution of this care-worn frame. Dispute with the pedant as to his knowledge of that author whom he has spent a life in expounding. Teach the carrier's drudge his daily course; but doubt me not in that which has long been my only study. For twenty long years, life has been a burden; I have sighed to yield, yet still have been doomed to bear it. To foresee some end to this lingering torment has been my only care. Many a time have I mocked myself with false hopes, and the first welcome symptoms of disease have yielded to an unfortunately strong constitution. At last I am rewarded; I have watched from their first doubtful appearance the certain seeds of decay. I have studied all that science has ever recorded, or experience taught of its symptoms, its gradual progress, and final consummation. And this is the day, almost the hour, I have fondly anticipated."

Another protracted pause, from increasing weakness, succeeded, uninterrupted by Oakley, whose attention was absorbed by the singular declaration he had just heard. The stillness of this mutual silence was broken by the successive tones of various time-pieces which Oakley for the first time observed were placed in different parts of the house. It would have puzzled him to account for the presence of these generally unheeded warnings of the monotony of the life they witnessed, but that from what he had just been told, it seemed to be Lord Rockington's occupation, to mark with studied accuracy the creeping pace of time, that he might foretell with certainty when its finger pointed to his own last hours. Roused, by these much-noted sounds, to a consciousness that time was not to be lost, Lord Rockington resumed.

"It was not merely to exhibit myself a commonplace memento of mortality that I summoned you here. I would will you heir to my feelings, as I have done to my fortunes; I would bequeath you, not

merely that wealth with which I have been wretched, but that experience with which you may be happy. I would have you despise the world as I do now, not yield its easy victim as I once did. I would leave, as the best legacy this world can contain, the consciousness that flattery is but the cloak of envy—confidence but a premium for treachery—that riches are but the means of purchasing disappointment—and that fame is the mark set up by fools to be the sport of knaves.”

There was enough of constitutional distrust in the nature of Oakley, as has been already stated, to make him a deeply-interested, almost an assenting auditor of the misanthropic dogmas of his dying uncle.

“I would for this,” continued Lord Rockington, “dedicate my last moments to recording the events and actions which marked the first part of a long life, and the reflections which have accumulated from them in the latter portion of it; but all this must I crowd into a score of sentences, and half as many minutes. My task is harder too, because from long disuse words now refuse to follow at the beck of thought. I had always enjoyed the substantial favours of fortune; for a time I had strutted in the tinsel trappings of fame. I had fought for my country, and conquered. I was the people’s idol; courted, caressed, and rewarded—it was the heaven of an hour. At this time a distant and disturbed colony required control; I was selected, from the difficulty of the task, and at once incurred the greatest curse that can befall the native of a free state—responsibility for the exercise of arbitrary powers. I know not now whether my acts were right or wrong: success did not sanction them. One reverse succeeded another, exaggerated accounts of which were sent to England. Distance magnified my delinquencies, and delayed my defence.

“The reaction of public opinion was overwhelming: I became the object of universal odium. The most subservient of my creatures, who had participated in

my every action, sought to save themselves at my expense; and when I thought I had been confiding in faithful followers, I found I had been harbouring pseudo-patriot spies. I was openly accused of cruelty, indirectly taunted with cowardice; and even the most improbable suspicion of peculation was widely circulated and readily believed. I hastened to England to clear my character—every ear was shut against my discredited defence, every door was closed against my disgraced person.

"I sought the minister whose verbally expressed intentions I had fulfilled, but as my powers had been discretionary, I had no written instructions to plead. I was freezingly received. He remembered nothing of the past, and for the future referred me to the issue of a threatened motion in parliament. On that anxiously-expected night, skulking in an obscure corner, I saw my accuser arrive. I had last beheld him presiding at a public dinner given in honour of my victory. He was quickly surrounded by troops of eager friends, giving assurances of success, which his confident look confirmed. He was loudly called on by name to commence, when amidst much confusion, the minister interposed, and stated that he had something to communicate which might render further proceedings unnecessary. Breathless attention succeeded. He then announced that it had pleased his Majesty to dismiss Lord Rockington from all his situations and appointments.

"The inhuman yell of delight, which under the technical appellation of universal cheering, burst from all sides at this declaration, fell upon my ear like the cry of blood-hounds fastening upon their victim. Instinctively I sought to escape the sound by flight, and yet it seemed to linger in the distance. 'Twas the last greeting of my fellow-men. Twenty years have since elapsed—I hear them still!"

Lord Rockington became violently agitated, as if to exclude these imaginary sounds; he raised to his ears

his withered hands—his wild and haggard eyes seemed for a moment to start beneath their pressure, then became fixed—the universal shudder with which he had concluded the sentence was succeeded by strong convulsions, and he remained for some time senseless.

Oakley summoned the ancient attendant whom he had before seen, and who was the only one allowed to approach his master, and demanded whether medical aid could not be procured; but the old man shook his head, and said he dared not so offend his dying lord.

After a time, Lord Rokington seemed by a strong effort to recover his speech; he raised himself upright, then bending towards Oakley, collected his remaining strength, and thus addressed him—

“Let those, who would scoff at the steadiness of my misanthropy, triumph in the idea that once again before I die I have sought the relief of kindred feelings, that in my last moments I have secured the congenial presence of one whose sincerity even I cannot doubt—Yes, I have found one who shall rejoice in my release, as I do myself. My expectant heir shall as eagerly count my ebbing pulse. His ready hand shall in sympathising pleasure return the convulsive grasp of death.”

These were the last words Lord Rockington spoke. He had seized Oakley's hand as he uttered them. He then sunk senseless on the sofa, and in a few hours this strange being was no more.

CHAPTER V.

Heavens, have I said, the bounty of this lord !
How many prodigal bits have slaves, and peasants,
This night englutted ! Who is not Timon's ?
What heart, head, sword, force, means, but is Lord Timon's ?
Great Timon, noble, worthy, royal Timon !
Ah ! when the means are gone that buy this praise,
The breath is gone, whereof this praise is made :
Feast-worn, fast-lost ; one cloud of winter showers,
These flies are couch'd.

SHAKESPEARE.

EVENTFUL indeed had these few last hours been to Oakley. They had brought with them, crowded within their narrow limits, (and utterly unforeseen, up to the moment of their arrival,) changes which would have sufficed to fill up a long life of anticipation. The emotions which they had excited in his mind had been as varied as the alteration they had produced in his situation was complete.

He had that morning for the first time in his life, beheld one who was then his nearest surviving relative. He had, though hitherto a perfect stranger, been admitted at once to his confidence. That confidence was as yet incomplete—when interrupted as abruptly as it had been commenced by final separation. But this strange benefactor had left him a solid memento of their transient connexion, a splendid fortune, which at once secured him the command of the attention and attractions of the world, coupled with the warning legacy which bade him repel its advances, and resist its allurements.

To the substantial advantages arising from his change in situation he was likely to be by no means in-

sensible, but this arose rather from a disagreeable recollection of the slights to which a dependent state had subjected his impatient spirit, than to any expectation of particular pleasure to be derived from future enjoyments. The parting advice with which the dying bequest had been accompanied, was on many accounts calculated to make the greatest impression on Oakley. That it was disinterested could not be denied, from the situation of him who gave it. That it was dictated by a sincere regard for him to whom it was addressed, had at the same time been testified by solid proofs. The natural bent of Oakley's character gave additional weight to these considerations. Neither his virtues nor talents were of that order which makes a man partial to society, because society is partial to him. A natural instability of temperament predisposed him to take offence, whilst a want of animal spirits prevented his shining in the ready "give and take" of every-day intercourse. The unpleasant impressions which these deficiencies implanted in a proud and reserved nature, had left a distaste for the world which had already prepared the way for that distrust which was inculcated in the last admonition of his dying uncle.

The aged attendant who had performed the last offices to his departed lord had left the room, and Oakley had remained, he knew not how long, absorbed in the reflections, which all that he had heard and seen was calculated to excite, even in the most thoughtless, but which had taken deep root in a mind to which gloomy impressions were so congenial. The sight of death itself is for the time saddening, even to the most mercurial spirit; but it was not that alone which infected Oakley. It was not the actual presence of the breathless body before him, so much as the chilling contagion of the withered mind he had so lately communed with, which still oppressed him. Most men, if thus suddenly endowed with a princely fortune, whilst possessing youth and health to enjoy it, purchased at no sacrifice of kindly feelings, would have felt even the

decent solemnity of the passing moment somewhat chequered with the coming gleams of the brightening future.

But this was not the impression made on Oakley. He even envied the lifeless form before him its release from the contests of the world, and almost repined at being left as his deputy in a situation where he must undergo the daily drudgery of resisting imposition, and detecting falsehood.

"Must I then," thought he, "commence this painful pilgrimage to which youth and health threaten a long perspective, and can I do so without dislike and dread, seeing as I have seen, that by twenty long years of ceaseless struggle and hopeless suffering, that proud spirit, the transient gleam of whose former fire lives in the canvas I this morning beheld, has been reduced to a fit tenant for the care-worn carcase from which it has but now obtained its release?"

Surfeited at length with the morbid indulgence of these feelings, Oakley sought a temporary relief in change of scene, and rose to leave the chamber of death, to which the shades of night had now imparted a congenial obscurity. The next room—the picture-gallery mentioned above—was only lighted by a single small candle-stick, left as it were carelessly on a table at the upper end, immediately under the portrait of Lord Rockington, and to which alone of all the inmates of the gallery it bent its feeble light. The surrounding gloom gave additional effect to that which alone was visible, and the countenance of which Oakley had only previously remarked the habitually imperious expression, seemed now to his heated imagination to indicate some special command to himself, and following the direction of the outstretched arm which pointed at vacancy, he fancied he beheld a door open at the further extremity of the gallery.

He could not be mistaken. He saw the figure of the aged attendant, who advanced with a cautious but a heavy tread, bearing in both hands a weight under

which he seemed ready to sink. As he approached the candle, Oakley raised it over his head, to convince himself he was not deceived, upon which the old man dropped his load and fled precipitately.

Oakley stopped one instant to examine what appeared to be a strong box, probably containing valuables, and then followed the fugitive. But his ignorance of the intricate turnings of the passages favoured the flight of the other, and after pursuing him in vain for some time, his attention was attracted by a noise which sounded like the animating applause of a theatre, and a moment afterwards many voices joined in the jocund chorus of "Life's a Bumper."

"Wretches," thought Oakley, "well may your insulted master have been impatient to quit a world of which he saw around him such samples. That the very hands which had but just been permitted to close his eyes, should within that hour turn to plunder—and that those menials who had been gorged with his bounty, should profane his last moments with their orgies!"

Hurrying back towards his uncle's chamber, he paused on the threshold, as if unwilling to suffer the offensive sounds of mirth to penetrate within—though the loudest uproar could no longer disturb its unconscious inmate; but nothing now met his ear, save the more congenial murmur of the evening breeze. Thus re-assured, he entered boldly, and felt refreshed by the calm and solemn sympathy of the still summer's evening.

In all the feelings which had been excited by the events he had latterly witnessed, he had been actuated entirely by impulse: he adopted as indisputable all the facts stated by Lord Rockington, without considering how much might be grounded on prejudice, and coloured by disappointment. In the disgusting scenes which he had afterwards witnessed, he would not have admitted it as possible that the character and conduct

of the master might a little palliate the brutality of the servants.

By this pre-determined canonization of Lord Rockington as a martyr, his own mortified vanity felt consoled. It has been said that he was from natural temperament peculiarly prone to suspicion, and susceptible to slight—and if in the unmerited fall of one formerly so celebrated as Lord Rockington, he had a proof of the caprice and falsehood of the world, it at once confirmed him in what he was disposed to think of others, and consoled him for what they might think of him.

“It will now,” thought he, “be mine to avoid, and theirs to court—yes, I shall now have it in my power to repay envy with scorn!”

The next morning brought Oakley's own servant, who had been sent to follow him, and Oakley lost no time in giving a summary dismissal to all the establishment of the late lord, of whose untimely and offensive mirth he had been an unintentional witness. He also despatched a messenger to ———, to summon Lord Rockington's man of business, who in due time arrived, in the person of Mr. Macdeed, the principal solicitor of the county town.

This worthy gentleman, as he jolted along in the identical chaise which had brought Oakley, consoled himself with the anticipation of an accession of business arising from the change of clients consequent upon the late demise, for Lord Rockington had not been habitually litigious, though much of Mr. Macdeed's celebrity had been owing to his conduct of the famous cause of “Rockington *versus* Latimer,” by which he had secured to the plaintiff the accession of a property which could never pay him twelve-pence, only at the expense of about as much as would have paid twelve months' salary to the twelve judges.

So striking a proof of how well he understood his business, had at once obtained him professional pre-

eminence in the county. The consciousness of this sort of decided superiority in a particular line, makes some men solemn and pompous, but Mr. Macdeed it had only made facetious and familiar, by far the most objectionable effect of the two, to a man in Oakley's present frame of mind.

In spite, however, of the forbidding frown of his auditor, Mr. Macdeed wasted upon him much stiff parchment-like sort of pleasantry, the rough draft of which had previously met with the approbation of the most fastidious tea-tables at the county town aforesaid. He was particularly lively upon the subject of the singularities of his late client. This was an impertinence which, least of all, Oakley could bear. He had risen that morning with an inviolable respect for the memory of his benefactor, and a fixed determination to follow his example in hating all whom he had left behind him in the world. It was no great trial of the consistency of his general hatred of mankind; that the only object which crossed his path, should be an obnoxious attorney; but the dislike which was as yet concentrated in him, might soon have spread over no small circle of acquaintance. Abruptly interrupting him, he commanded him to proceed at once to business, and that, too, in a tone sensibly wounding Mr. Macdeed's self-importance, which was not the less thinskin because dressed in smiles.

The will was found in that identical box which Oakley had accidentally rescued from the hand of Lord Rockington's old servant, who was a subscribing witness, and who had therefore seen it deposited there—and the glimpse he then caught of the other valuables in it, (many thousand pounds worth of jewels,) had probably excited his cupidity.

The disposition of the property was concise and characteristic. There were no legacies; and every thing, without reserve, was left to Oakley. This being ascertained, Mr. Macdeed was summarily dismissed with a want of courtesy which aggravated the offence

already given, and of which Oakley afterwards felt the effects.

In the arrangements Oakley made for the funeral, he thought he best consulted the feelings of the deceased by limiting the display of fictitious and assumed grief to those only whose aid was absolutely necessary to remove the body to its last place of rest; forbidding the presence of any one in the character of mourner but himself. In the meantime, having written to Germain alone, to announce the death of their uncle, and the change in his circumstances, he occupied himself with solitary rambles in the picturesque wilds around the castle, mistaking, however, the source of the pleasure he derived from this, and attributing to satisfaction at the absence of all traces of man's corroding presence, the sensations which arose merely from a strong susceptibility to the beauties of nature.

CHAPTER VI.

At first
I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue :
Where the impression of mine eye enfixing,
Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me,
Which warp'd the line of every other favour ;
Scorn'd a fair colour, or express'd it stol'n ;
Extended or contracted all proportions
To a most hideous object.

SHAKESPEARE.

GERMAIN and Fitzalbert remained sometime at ———, not knowing exactly where to transport themselves. Most of the friends of the latter, of whose hospitality he meant to avail himself during the dead months, had not yet established themselves in their country quarters.

Fitzalbert now passed all his mornings in bed, having a happy facility of sleeping in the absence of every other amusement, and this he enjoyed in spite of the situation of his bed, which was so near the window that he could from his pillow, command the whole range of bathing-machines, and might, if he pleased, trace the entrance of the well-flounced petticoat at one door, and the exit of the somewhat tighter fitting bathing-dress at the other.

Germain, who was habitually an early riser, determined to avail himself of this independence of the companionship of his friend, to ease his conscience of the promised visit to the Dormers.

Of all the minor social sins, none entails so acute a sense of shame as a past and repented-of flirtation—and it was with very uncomfortable feelings of guilty

embarrassment, that Germain approached the lodging of his former mistress, to whom he had once paid attentions so assiduous. Not but that he must be acquitted of any legal offence: he never had involved himself in any engagement, or even committed himself by a declaration—he had never indeed been guilty of any thing more definite and positive than exchanging awkward and sheepish looks across the pew, when her father published the Sunday's banns. However, the apothecary's wife had long settled that the parson's pupil and his daughter would make a sweet pair, and were likely to have a fine family; and the attorney's lady hinted that Mr. Dormer knew where good settlements were to be had.

There were many local associations about the place, where they had formerly met, which had conspired to excite Germain's tender feelings. The parsonage itself was pretty and pastoral—with the early morning his eye would wander from his book to follow the form of Fanny, watering the rose-beds under his window; and after the studies of the day, they used to drink tea together in a woodbine arbour. Add to all this, that he was but eighteen; and if there ever was a youth of that age who could resist the perpetual proximity of a liquid blue eye, and a fair fresh skin, he is a monster whom the whole sex will have given up in despair before he is five-and-twenty.

But three years had since elapsed, and in the meantime Germain's mind had been as much enlarged as Fanny Dormer's person. The place of meeting, too, instead of reviving the charm of consistent propriety, was incongruous and inconvenient; and whilst waiting in the narrow passage of the paper-built lodging house, it was in vain that he endeavoured to fortify himself with souvenirs of beds of roses and woodbine bowers, against the over-powering smell of fried sole which arose from the intrusive kitchen below. The small side parlour into which he was shown, and into which were crowded Mr. Dormer, Fanny, and her multitu-

dinous occupations, presented the appearance of confusion without comfort. Mr. Dormer was stuck in an easy chair in one corner—his attention agreeably divided between his lumbago and the county paper.

There was nothing extraordinary in Fanny's reception of her visitor; but as Germain's eye fell upon the out-stretched hand which accompanied the greeting, he remarked that her fingers (unlike Aurora's) were tipped with ink—no very singular consequence of writing most of the morning, but one that would never have been remarked by a lover.

"I hope I don't interrupt you," said Germain.

"Always a welcome interruption," replied Mr. Dormer; "but you would be puzzled to time your visit so as to find Fanny idle."

And, indeed, that indefatigable young lady, besides the usual allowance of scribbling, which had produced the disfiguring upon her fingers noted above, had been employed in sorting Scotch pebbles and sand-stones, spreading dried sea-weed, and was now engaged in preparing sundry articles for a Ladies' Repository—an ingenious establishment, for which many ladies waste more money in purchasing materials, than industrious work-women would charge for the finished articles, in order to have the pleasure of seeing charity distributed, and the needy relieved, not in proportion as food is wanted, but as fire-screens are fancied. To this Fanny was a zealous but thrifty contributor, and she was now occupied in rounding emery strawberries, the foliage of which was to be formed of scraps of her light green cloth pelisse.

Germain commenced the conversation by attempting some awkward compliments upon her notable pursuits, but as he felt himself in a false position, he was relieved by Mr. Dormer's addressing him.

"Upon my word, Mr. Germain, you do no credit to your keep since you left us—you have not fared so well in those meagre countries where you have been, as you used to do, upon my fattened culeys and se-

ven years' old moor-mutton, and some of Fanny's firmity for supper."

The fact was, that the mode of life Germain had been lately leading at Paris, was not near so much calculated for the promotion of "too solid flesh," as the vegetating state of existence at Rosedale Rectory, where even sentiment was rather soporic.

"I suppose," continued Mr. Dormer, "that they half starved you in those Catholic countries with their fast days."

But Germain protesting that he never had suffered any positive privation; Mr. Dormer, by a natural transition from body to soul, turned to the other subject, almost as constantly in his mind; and after folding in an important manner the newspaper he held in his hand, he began.

"Pray, Mr. Germain, might I ask whether in those popish parts you have lately visited, you were ever unfortunate enough to be present at any of those sacrifices to superstition—those auto-da-fès—those burnings of heretics?"

"No indeed," replied Germain, rather surprised: "nor was I aware that any events of the kind had taken place within the memory of man. This is the first I ever heard of it."

"I am sorry, my young friend," rejoined Mr. Dormer, with an air of reproach, "to find that you have made so little use of your time—that you have not been a more observant traveller."

Then again unfolding the county paper, he read aloud, with earnest emphasis, the words in italics.

"*Characteristics of Catholicism—Burning of a Jew.* It is, we are proud to say, not a little owing to our unceasing efforts in the *good protestant cause*, that these burning piles are seen only as a warning beacon from afar—that the flames are not now kindled in Smithfield, or the crackling fagots heard in the market-place beneath our own office-window. For if such is the treatment of the papists towards an unoffend-

ing *Israelite*, what might we expect, if they had the power, towards the objects of their unceasing detestation—the *loyal Protestants* of these most *religious realms*? Yet there are amongst us those infatuated enough to wish to open wide our doors to them. What doors? and to whom?—why the very doors of those two houses of parliament which, never let it be forgotten, they conspired to blow to atoms with their hellish popish plot.”

Germain, perceiving that his worthy friend was not in a state of mind for serious argument, simply asked: “Do you think, sir, the Catholics would be so much more likely to blow up the parliament, if they had seats in it themselves?”

“God forbid we should ever try!” ejaculated the Rev. Mr. Dormer; in which short question and answer is contained the epitome of the arguments on either side, which are sometimes diluted into many successive nights’ debate on this somewhat threadbare subject.

“But come, Mr. Germain,” said Mr. Dormer, after a pause, “music has charms, and Fanny shall delight you with ‘Home, sweet Home.’” Accordingly Fanny posted herself obediently at a jingling upright piano-forte, and began.

It is a penalty upon the popularity of a piece of music in England, that in six months every hand-organist grinds it, and every ostler whistles it; and the attraction which in this instance it originally owed to one person alone, is perpetually weakened by its being screamed or slurred over by every young lady who has a single note in her voice, and most of those who have none.

“It is not so much,” said Mr. Dormer, “Fanny’s musical talent, as that she sings it with so much depth of true domestic feeling.”

Germain bowed an extorted assent to the paternal puff, and repeated mechanically, “So much depth of true domestic feeling.”

The extremes of art and nature sometimes touch each other, and even Lady Flamborough, with all her manœuvring, could not have attempted a more home thrust, as a maternal manager, than Mr. Dormer, in the simplicity of his heart, gave utterance to, in this mere ebullition of maternal affection. But Germain was at present proof against the remaining charms of Fanny Dormer; he felt triply armed against a relapse by the consciousness of a vast foot, thick waist, and inkey fingers; and not a little ashamed of his former weakness, he brought his visit to an abrupt conclusion.

Upon Germain's return to his lodgings, he found Oakley's letter, announcing the death of their uncle; but as this letter had followed him from place to place, resting by the way at sundry country post-offices, it did not forestall the regular notice of the event in the London papers.

Germain was not a little surprised at Oakley's dwelling much more, in the first part of his letter, upon the loss he had sustained in the death of a relation he had never known, than upon the acquisition of a fortune which he had always expected. From this turning to the concerns of his friend, Oakley continued—

“I can assure you, my dear Germain, that neither this important change in my own fortune, nor the agitation of the unexpected event which caused it, has prevented me from reflecting much and seriously on your future prospects, such as I think I am able to foresee them, from the insight that long intimacy has given me into your disposition, and however unwelcome to you it may be, I cannot but repeat, that the unhappy facility of your temper, which renders it an impossibility to you to say, ‘No,’ will open your purse to every sharper, and surrender your heart to the first flirt you meet. This last is a danger, however, against which it is quite out of my province to guard you; but as to the first, though I cannot prevent it, I may post-

pone its evil consequences to you; and as you are always in want of money, and I have now more than I shall ever know what to do with, I have desired my banker, without limitation, to answer your drafts."

"Generous fellow! his conclusion is admirable, though his reasoning is somewhat defective," thought Germain, calling to mind, with consolatory consciousness, what had passed since they parted, and that he had escaped being either Fitzalbert's dupe, or Fanny Dormer's victim.

He found Fitzalbert still *en robe de chambre*, at the breakfast-table, over muffins and shrimps.

"Nothing in the newspaper," said he; I have just finished it. Let me see; 'Marriages—Mr. John Smith to Miss Jane Brown, both of this town.'—Important. 'Birth.—At Little Warren, the Lady of the Rev. Peter Parsley was brought to bed of twins, being her nineteenth and twentieth.'—More inconvenient to the Rev. Peter Parsley than interesting to us. But, what is this?—'Died, on Thursday last, at Rockington Castle, George James, Lord Viscount Rockington;—by his lordship's demise, the ancient title becomes extinct, but all his ample fortunes descend to his nephew, Earnest Oakley, Esq.' Did you know this, Germain?"

"I have just heard from Oakley, announcing the event."

"Oakley! well, I wish it had been you.—I hope, however, he will make a proper use of it. By the bye, Béchamel is now out of place: he should write about him, he is quite a *cordon bleu* for the first course; and though he knows nothing about *pâtisserie*, of course Oakley will have a confectioner."

"All in good time," said Germain; "he writes me word that he is about to leave Rockington Castle for his other place, Goldsborough Park, where he is wanted on business, by the late Lord Rockington's agent for that property. I think I shall go over and see him there."

"I can drop you then, at the park-gate; for I have received a very pressing summons from Lady Boreton, to join the party she has just collected. You must meet me again at the Boreton's: you are included in the invitation, all in due form: 'Know your family well'—'old friend of your mother's;'—and so forth."

Germain, to whom a long *tête-à-tête* with Oakley in his present temper, had few attractions, and who was also anxious as soon as possible to establish himself in the world, caught readily at this proposal of Fitzalbert's.

"Will there," said he, "be a large party at the Boretons!"

"Of that you may always feel yourself pretty sure; a little mixed, sometimes; But I own that is no great objection to me—my taste is become so depraved that I rather relish a tiger. From long usage, the regular routine of the exclusives appears to me, 'weary. flat,' et cetera. More than I envy Oakley the fullness of his purse, do I envy you the freshness of your feelings. For after all, of what use are riches but as the capital with which to purchase pleasure—the real free-trade which is all over at five-and-twenty? Then are our ports honestly open for the reception of every agreeable sensation from without, but after that we are subject to all the drawbacks of our artificial situation, and fastidiousness is the protecting duty with which we starve our senses."

Germain, who had never heard Fitzalbert utter a serious sentence before, was rather puzzled to know whether he was quizzing or not. To avoid the awkwardness of mistaking his vein, he asked him: "Of what species are the tigers we are to meet at Lady Boreton's—physical or intellectual—bucks or bores?"

"Principally the latter, for her ladyship is rather blue, and has generally some hangers-on who dabble in literature, or skim the surface of science. But don't be alarmed—you will also meet Lady Latimer and

her two unmarried sisters—and these among them secure the attendance of all the best men, whether marrying or otherwise, who can get themselves invited. What would I give that Lady Latimer should be as new to me as she is to you! Gladly would I suffer, as you will, from the first fear of her frowns, to be rewarded with a faint hope of her smiles—but, alas! we have long settled for life into easy intimacy and friendly indifference. I am on this, as on every thing else—perfectly *blasé*. Why is that phrase as exclusively French as the feeling is English? It is long since any thing to my taste has seemed *fresh*, except, indeed, these shrimps,” added he, changing his tone suddenly, and adding another to the hecatomb of shells which crowded his plate; after which he rose from the breakfast-table, and they made arrangements for their departure on the morrow for Boreton Park, where Germain was to join Fitzalbert, after having spent a night by the way with his friend Oakley.

Lest the reader, however, should have as great a dread as Germain himself of a *tête-à-tête* with Oakley in his present gloomy temper, we will not intrude beyond the park-gate where Fitzalbert deposited his fellow-traveller with, “By the bye, Germain, you may as well see if you can do any thing with Oakley about an exchange of that property which joins Latimer Moors—you may remember I showed it to you at a distance, from the top of that hill when I brought down both those two old birds you had just missed.”

CHAPTER VII.

The catastrophe is a nuptial. On whose side?

SHAKSPEARE.

"Who do you think is coming here to-day?" said Lady Flamborough to her two daughters, as she retired with them to her dressing-room, the party dispersing after breakfast at Boreton Park.

The young ladies were well aware, from long experience of their mother's manner, that this could only apply to an unmarried, and yet a marrying man, and Lady Caroline therefore promptly replied—

"I suppose, mamma, you mean Mr. Germain—Mr. Fitzalbert told me you expected him."

"Yes, my dear; I remember him a very pretty little boy when I last saw him with his mother, soon after Mr. Germain's death. It was a shocking thing, to be sure, to be left an orphan so young; but the long minority must have much improved his property, and there is nothing so desirable in a young man as ready money for an outfit."

"But, mamma," said Lady Jane, "Major Sumner told me that he knew for certain that Mr. Germain had spent all his ready money."

"I don't know," replied Lady Flamborough rather sharply, "what right Major Sumner has to tell you any thing; but I must tell you, the encouragement you give to such a man must be very disadvantageous to you."

"Really, mamma, I am not aware of ever having given Major Sumner any reason to suppose that I en-

couraged his attentions. Our neighbourhood at dinner here is purely accidental. You might as well attack Caroline for sitting next Mr. Fitzalbert."

"That is quite a different case," said Lady Flamborough. "Mr. Fitzalbert is a privileged person, for he is known never to speak to a girl, unless a dowager is the only alternative. But no young lady ought ever to talk twice to a man who seems to take pleasure in her society, unless she knows him to be eligible. And as for Major Sumner, he has the most sighing-swain-like manner I ever beheld. He asks you to drink a glass of wine as if he were uttering a sentiment, and hands you to dinner as if he were leading you to the altar.

"Well, mamma," answered Lady Jady, "you have often complained of my inattention in not following your advice, but you will not have to reproach me with disobedience, if you never enjoin any thing more difficult than the avoiding Major Sumner; for, to tell you the truth, he bores me uncommonly."

"To be sure he does. I was certain you had too much good taste to like him; but that wouldn't stop that old gossip Lady Diana Griffin's pen. She was allowed to walk out alone to dinner yesterday, which of course called her attention to who sat next whom; and whilst she reposed in solitary state, with the vacant places for the absent Banquos left on each side of her, I observed her eyes fixed across the table upon the long chin of Major Sumner, which was much oftener protruded perpendicularly over your plate than his own; and this morning, as I went to breakfast, I saw six letters in her formidably legible hand-writing waiting for stray franks."

"But I think I can defy even her ingenuity to extract an incident out of our dull dinner."

"Perhaps so; but I cannot too often recommend caution to you both, as to encouraging disadvantageous dangles in a country-house. It is twice as dangerous as a London season. There some kind friend is sure

to bring one the first unpleasant remark hot from the club-window where it was cooked, and one can take measures accordingly; but here, a report is shuttle-cocked backwards and forwards for six months before one hears it, gaining fresh strength every time it passes through the post-office, till at last a young lady is set down as behaving very ill to some beggar who has been accidentally thrown in her way. It is rather a dangerous experiment to get yourself talked about for the man you really mean to marry. It is purely mischievous to be buzzed about with an exceptionable. If it was for no other reason, that every recorded flirtation, however transient, is unjustly or not, reckoned as a year added to a young lady's age."

"I dare say you are quite right, mamma," said Lady Caroline, who feeling that the lecture was now no longer confined to her sister, thought it as well to come to her assistance, and at the same time, confine the conversation to the specific charge; "but, with regard to Major Sumner's attention to Jane, you must recollect, that as soon as ever Miss Luton began to play her eternal concerto, that identical long chin, which you accuse of having hung perpendicularly over Jane's plate, was nailed to the sounding board; and there the Major sat in fixed admiration, through all its endless rondos."

"Ay," answered Lady Flamborough, "that is a great mistake of poor Mrs. Luton's; she is one of the old school. That indiscriminating desire to display a daughter's talents, is justly out of date. Young ladies have not fascination at their fingers' ends, as mothers and music-masters have long conspired to persuade the world. Besides, men, with all their boasted superiority, are such vain weak creatures, that they are always easier caught by admiration paid than demanded. You will be able to find out what Mr. Germain's tastes and pursuits are, and then it will be time enough to display yours, if you find that they don't clash."

"But why, mamma, should you settle it at once, as a matter of course, that there should be such reciprocal attraction between Mr. Germain and me?" asked Lady Jane; "I never saw him, and he probably never heard of me."

"That's the very reason, answered Lady Flamborough, "that I expect something to come of your present meeting. You will be for some time boxed up here together. He has never been out of London; and, without making you vain, there is not much here to distract his attention. If this general election takes place, we shall probably see his friend Mr. Oakley here, as his interest is the same as that of the Boretons. He, from what I've heard, is more difficult to manage, but very good-looking, and enormously rich. He would just suit Caroline: and his property joins Lord Latimer's—it would be the very thing for Louisa."

"I doubt, mamma, whether Louisa would think it the very thing for her, that her next neighbour, a gay young man, should settle at once into a humdrum Benedict, and a brother-in-law into the bargain."

"That puts me in mind," returned Lady Flamborough, "to tell you how much shocked I was the other day, to hear you, in a mixed society, allude to Louisa's flirtations; for though she only exacts so much individual attention as is necessary to make up the sum of general admiration, which, as a reigning beauty, is undoubtedly her due, yet it is a subject upon which any young lady, and more particularly a sister, had better affect utter unconsciousness. - At the same time, if Mr. Germain admires you, Jane, as I expect he will, make it obvious before Louisa comes, for she certainly sometimes does seem to take a pleasure in making a snatch at loosely hung chains."

A summons to luncheon here interrupted the maternal lecture.

"What do you mean to do afterwards?" asked Lady Flamborough.

"Caroline is going to ride," answered Lady Jane; "and I mean to walk with Miss Luton through the park, as far as the north lodge."

"The north lodge," said Lady Flamborough, "just so; the road from Goldsborough Park comes through the north lodge; and you never look so well as when walking," added she, casting first an approving glance at the fine form of her daughter, and then rather an anxious one at her pale cheek, on which the healthy hue of exercise, would, no doubt, effect improvement.

But this morning, the roses on Lady Jane's cheek were doomed to bloom unseen, for Germain intentionally protracted his arrival till dusk, thinking the dressing-hour the most convenient opportunity for dropping into the middle of a large party of people, among whom he knew hardly a creature.

His youth and inexperience will sufficiently account for his feeling a little shy before he was duly amalgamated; for the most self-possessed can hardly help experiencing an uncomfortable sensation of insufficiency, when endeavouring in vain to catch, as it is bandied before him, the tone of a society to which he alone is strange.

As Germain stood for a moment with the handle of the drawing-room door in his hand, before he could decide upon opening it, that act was involuntarily accelerated, by hearing voices descending the stairs behind him, and he found himself in a blaze of light; and, among a confused mass of heads, distinguished his friend Fitzalbert, who, advancing to meet him, presented him in due form to his hostess, Lady Boretton. Her ladyship overloaded her new acquaintance with civilities; she was excessively voluble, and it was difficult to remember much of her communications: which arose more from the redundancy than the paucity of matter they contained.

She introduced Germain in succession to each of her other guests, who happened to pass near them, following up each presentation with a little "aside,"

meant to put her new visiter *au fait* of the various characters and pursuits of the motley assemblage. But either her definitions were not distinct enough, or his faculties were too much embarrassed to enable him to retain their separate identity; and when Lady Boreton was summoned away to some new object of attention, Germain retained only a confused consciousness, that there were among the unknown faces, that surrounded him, captains that had been to the North Pole; chemists, who could extract ice from caloric; transatlantic travellers, and sedentary bookworms; some authors, who owned to anonymous publications they had never written; and others, who were suspected of those they denied; besides the usual quantum of young ladies and gentlemen, who rested their claims to distinction upon the traditionary deeds of their great-grandfathers.

One little man, in particular, whom he could not make out at all, attracted Germain's attention; he fidgetted about Lady Boreton whilst she was talking to him, but she, instead of introducing and defining him like the rest, only told him to ring the bell. When Germain was left to himself, and therefore could attend to what was going on around him, he saw this little man attempt in vain to insinuate himself into two or three of the little groupes that were dotted about the room, and uniformly repulsed in the same way as he had been by Lady Boreton. At last he came up to Germain himself, who was standing alone, and asked him if he had ever been in that part of the country before. Germain, with true English reserve, felt half offended at what he thought impertinence in a person to whom he had not been introduced, and was inclined to answer him shortly, when Fitzalbert coming up, shivering, and saying rather sharply, "those doors haven't an idea of shutting," the little man flew to shut them, and Germain was on the point of asking his friend whether he was the culprit architect, when the mystery was explained by Lady Bore-

ton crying out, in the highest key of her voice:—"Sir John, dinner is ready;" and then the little man, having just shut one door, was seen sneaking out of the other with the lady of the highest rank upon his arm.

Germain afterwards found that poor Sir John was considered a nonentity alike by those who stood before the chairs, and those who sat around his table. Lady Boreton's masculine mind comprehended equally political principles and domestic details, whilst Sir John's department was confined to signing deeds and helping soup.

Germain having drawn back to allow those who assumed either precedence on their own parts, or partiality on that of the ladies, to pass two and two before him, followed among the mass of men who brought up the rear, and would probably have been condemned to sit between two strangers, had not Fitzalbert made him a sign to take a vacant place on the other side of the lady whom he had escorted.

In availing himself of this hint, Germain had only time to cast a transient glance at a timely-shaped profile, and a prettily turned figure, when Fitzalbert interrupted his survey by saying, "Lady Jane, you must allow me to make you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Germain."

A slight acknowledgment was all that immediately followed this fortuitous introduction, but it lighted up for a moment Lady Flamborough's watchful countenance, even though she was herself suffering under a severe dose of one of the most unrelenting bores that ever infested society.

"It is always as well here to know who one's next neighbour is," continued Fitzalbert; "for this is not one of those snug parties where one can do or say what one pleases without observation."

"How do you mean?" asked Germain.

"Why, Lady Boreton encourages these literary poachers on the manors, or rather *manners* of high

life; she gives a sort of right of free chase to all cockney sportsmen to wing one's follies in a double-barrelled duodecimo, or hunt one's eccentricities through a hot-pressed octavo. Not that they are, generally speaking, very formidable shots—they often bring down a different bird from the one they aimed at, and sometimes shut their eyes and blaze away at the whole covey; which last is, after all, the best way. Their coming here to pick out individuals, is needless trouble. Do you know the modern recipe for a finished picture of fashionable life? Let a gentlemanly man, with a gentlemanly style, take of foolscap paper a few quires; stuff them well with high-sounding titles—dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, *ad libitum*. Then open the Peerage at random, pick a suppositious author out of one page of it, and fix the imaginary characters upon some of the rest; mix it all up with quantum suff. of puff, and the book is in a second edition before ninety-nine readers out of a hundred have found out the one is as little likely to have written, as the others to have done what is attributed to them.”

“How then can Lady Boreton's assistance be of any consequence in a pursuit which seems as free as air?” asked Germain.

“Oh! here at least they have an opportunity of observing the cut of one's coat, and the colour of one's hair. For instance: that young gentleman opposite is a self-constituted definer of fashion, in which character he has not only already recorded that a fork, not a knife, should be the active agent in carrying food to the mouth, but has made some more original discoveries, such as, that young ladies should be dieted on the wings of boiled chickens, and fine gentlemen should quaff nought but hock and soda-water; that roast beef is a vulgar horror, and beer an abomination. I will secure his rejection of me upon his next conscription of the fashionable world.—Some small beer, pray,” added Fitzalbert, turning round to the servant, and speaking in a peculiarly decided tone of voice. “So

sensitive a soul must be much shocked at much he hears and sees amongst great people "*en domestique*," as he calls it; by which, don't imagine he means 'High Life below Stairs.' I hope, however, Lady Jane, that before he next hints a sketch of your sister, Lady Latimer, he will have learnt that she has not red hair, and does not habitually exclaim, 'Good gracious!'"

Fitzalbert was in high spirits; and whilst he thus went rattling on, necessarily engrossed so much of the attention of both Germain and Lady Jane, that the neighbourhood of the two latter did not seem likely to have the beneficial consequences at first anticipated by Lady Flamborough; but the desired impression was nevertheless caught, whether naturally from accidental affinity, or afterwards inoculated during a long conversation with Lady Flamborough herself, certain it is, that when Germain lighted his flat candlestick for bed, the predominant feeling in his mind was, that Lady Jane Sydenham was a remarkably nice girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

I shall forget to have thee still stand here,
Remembering how I love thy company.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE next morning's post brought a few lines from Lady Latimer to Lady Boreton, announcing her intended arrival to dinner that day. The intercourse between the two families had always been scrupulously maintained by the regular alternation of prescribed visits; and the acceptance of the expected invitation always was received on both sides with great appearance of satisfaction. Not that much pleasure was ever anticipated by either: but any falling off in their reciprocal cordiality would at once have threatened to disturb the political peace of the county, which was only maintained by a compromise between these two great rival interests.

At the present moment, there were appearances which threatened that this truce would not be of much longer duration; and, following the example of more dignified diplomatists, they redoubled the outward demonstrations of mutual good understanding, as their fears increased that future hostilities would be inevitable. These fears were, in this instance, more sincere than is often the case with some of their natural prototypes, which arose probably from this difference in their situation, that if they fought, it must be with their own money, not the people's; they would have to distribute, not to levy; the gain might be public, but the cost would certainly be private.

● However, at the next general election a successor would have to be selected for Mr. Medium, who had

announced his intention of then retiring, after having been for thirty years received as an oracle by both parties, principally from his own indecision of character. He had not unfrequently carried the House with him from the mere charm of inconsistency, and been listened to as an orator from a reputation for sincerity, which seemed chiefly founded upon an earnest manner and indifferent English. Such as he was, though he had been a convenient stop-gap, his general leaning to Tory principles had satisfied Lord Latimer, who was not an eager politician, and his occasional effective opposition to ministers had almost consoled Lady Boreton, who was a red-hot liberal.

Those most cogent reasons for keeping the peace, whether of countries or counties—the want of men and money, were both here in full force. Lord Latimer had no younger brother to put forward to quicken his political feelings with the incitement of family distinction, and Lady Boreton could never attempt to produce Sir John on the hustings. On both sides too their finances left no available surplus after current expenses. Lady Boreton's anxiety to save the county from the disgrace of being represented by two such Tories, had induced her to turn her attention towards Oakley, whose political feelings were supposed to be liberal, and who, from his recently-acquired great possessions, seemed to be the fittest person to put forward. She was very anxious to get him to her house, that she might have an opportunity of sounding him upon the subject, and she the more rejoiced at the super-civility which had induced her to invite Lady Flamborough and her daughters to meet Lady Latimer, as she had some vague hope that the natural attraction between a great party on the one side, and handsome girls on the other, might be ripened into a state of things, which might prevent so lukewarm a politician as Lord Latimer from taking an active part against Oakley.

“You are not yet acquainted with Lady Latimer,” said Lady Boreton to Germain, as her eye once more

glanced over the few careless traces of that lady's pen, which wandered, surrounded by roses and cupids, over the shining surface of her smooth and scented note-paper.

"No, I never had the pleasure of seeing her," replied Germain, "and shall be most happy in this opportunity of meeting one, of whom all who know her speak in raptures."

"Oh, certainly," said Lady Boreton, "a most delightful person; a little, perhaps—" added she, lowering her voice, "a little perhaps spoilt by the world. You have seen Lady Flamborough—well, you may imagine the sort of education that she would give her daughters. Lady Latimer, with all her acknowledged attractions, is singularly superficial, and wants mind, poor thing; and what, my dear Mr. Germain, is social intercourse without mind?—Would you believe it, when I asked her to attend Professor ——'s lectures with me, she said, she was much obliged to me, but she slept very well without them; and when I wished to introduce to her a friend of mine, who had just written a beautiful book, she said—not unless she could shut him up when she liked. Depend upon it, you will find Lady Latimer wants mind. Mr. Alley, I believe the laboratory is ready."

With this Lady Boreton, left Germain, who had not been so fascinated with what he had seen of her, as not to receive with some reservation of his own opinion, the disparaging account she had given him of Lady Latimer.

Strolling into the library in search of a book, he met Lady Flamborough, who had been, she said, to choose some drawings for the girls to copy for her.

"You don't know Louisa—Lady Latimer, I mean—do you, Mr. Germain?" said she.

Germain again replying in the negative, and again repeating his desire to be able to answer in the affirmative, she continued, whilst she slowly turned over the contents of the portfolio she had been seeking:—"Oh, of

course you may imagine, Mr. Germain, how gratifying to a mother's feelings must be the universal admiration she engrosses, and indeed even I must be allowed to add it is her due. She is reckoned very like Jane; to be sure Madame Maradin says, Jane has much the finest figure, but then, Louisa is not so very young as her sister is. I should say too, that Jane has the most countenance, but then, perhaps, I am not quite a fair judge—I may speak, you know, from a mother's knowledge of their character, but in my opinion, Jane's face shows the most sensibility of expression. If any thing, perhaps, Louisa rather wants countenance. Here it is—Guercino's Sybil. Good morning, Mr. Germain."

The weather continuing threatening after luncheon, the gentlemen guests of Boreton Park, limited their afternoon's exercise to a critical stroll through that part of the place which was near the house. One friend of Sir John's found out, that unless his hot-houses, which had just been finished at an enormous expense, were built upon quite a different principle, they would never be fit to ripen even a crab-apple; one that his thriving and extensive plantations ought all to be cut down, or the place would be too damp for any thing but frogs; another, that the house must be pulled down, and built in the snug bottom by the trout-stream; one discovered that his new stables were not large enough for dog-kennels; another, that if he had the misfortune to possess such a set of ribs as tenanted them, he would turn them all loose rather than they should cost him another feed of corn; and, as the mizzling rain drove them home, all agreed, whilst they were ascending the broad and easy steps under the shelter of the splendid portico, which marked the centre of the extended façade, that they would not live in such a dirty, damp, dreary hole, if any body would give it to them.

As two long dusky hours yet remained before dinner, and they had already settled the local demerits of

every thing by which they were surrounded, it was but natural that they should next occupy themselves with the personal qualifications of those who were about to be added to their number; and as Germain wandered about the different corners of the spacious hall in which they were assembled, various were the little disparaging comments upon both Lord and Lady Latimer which he heard; and though there were none of them of any great importance, yet the avidity with which they were retailed, seemed to him at variance with that deference which he had always heard was paid to them by the society collectively in which they moved; for he did not as yet know enough of the world to be aware, that though from any fashionable pre-eminence which made a person conspicuous, it naturally followed that he or she should be often talked of, yet praise by no means followed as a necessary consequence.

On one side, he heard that Latimer was an excellent fellow, but he certainly had done some very odd things—it was a pity! one knew for certain that Lady Latimer rouged; another was quite sure that her foot was not so small as the far-famed one of a celebrated actress. A little further on he found Major Sumner sentimentalizing upon “the unfeeling manner in which she had behaved to his poor friend Colonel Woodbine, who though a most gallant officer, as brave as a lion in the field, was of an unfortunately susceptible nature, and after flirting desperately with him at Brighton, she cruelly cut him when next they met. Poor Woodbine!” added the major, “if it had not been to get over the impression her conduct made upon him, I don’t think that he would ever have gone upon the expedition which proved fatal to him.”

“Where did he go to?” asked Germain; “the tropic or the polar regions?”

“No,” said Major Sumner, “he went duck-shooting in the fens, and got his feet wet. Well, depend upon it, Lady Latimer has no heart.”

Except Germain, almost every body seemed to have some anecdote of Lord or Lady Latimer to contribute, derived from their personal knowledge of them. There were only two other persons in the room, who, it was evident, were not acquainted with either of them; one was a literary protégé of Lady Boreton's, who had lately written a novel in which a character of Lady Latimer had been insinuated, and the other was a friend of his, a periodical critic, who had persuaded the world of the striking resemblance the character bore to the original.

Any further comments were interrupted by the entrance of lights, which produced a challenge from Fitzalbert to Germain to the billiard-table, that stood in the centre of the spacious hall. Germain did not hesitate on accepting the proposal, though his attention was still much occupied with all he had lately heard, and his curiosity much excited to find out how far his own impressions would confirm it. "Wants mind—countenance—and heart," thought he, whilst apparently engrossed in choosing his cue.

Germain played well at billiards; Fitzalbert perhaps rather better; but this point had not been decided even as far as the first game, and there was still uncertainty enough about the event, to give interest to the various little bets that had been accumulating as they proceeded, when the grinding of carriage-wheels through the gravel announced an arrival, and the expected guests were ushered in due form through the front door. Germain involuntarily paused, even in the act of taking aim at a dead hazard, in spite of sundry requisitions from those around him to "go on, go on; I've backed you to do this."

Of all the sights and wonders of the world, there is hardly any which one cannot so completely anticipate in idea, by the exertion of a very ordinary share of imagination, as almost to incur disappointment upon actual inspection. To this general rule there is one brilliant exception. A perfectly beautiful woman

when first seen, is sure to present some charm which far exceeds any pre-conceived expectation. Such was the impression made upon Germain when raising his head from the billiard-table he first beheld Lady Latimer. She entered, followed by Lord Latimer, and leading on the other side a third and unexpected visiter, whose embarrassment she seemed to be endeavouring to lessen. So thoroughly was this third person protected against the damps of an autumnal evening, that it was impossible for the most critical eye to decide more, than that the little she showed of her face seemed pleasing, and the still less that was seen of her figure appeared young.

As Lady Boreton advanced from an opposite door to meet her guests, Lady Latimer introduced this unexpected addition as "her particular friend, Miss Mor-daunt, rather out of health—wrote on purpose to ask to be allowed to bring her, and quite forgot to mention it in that stupid hurried note."

Lady Latimer evidently thought that she had said more than enough on the subject, and turning aside to address some one else, lost Lady Boreton's embarrassed and therefore embarrassing reply, which was in words that "she was always too happy to see any friend of hers," but which in tone rather implied that her house was more than full. It seemed, indeed, to be so felt by the young lady herself, and proportionably to increase that shyness which had been at first evident, so as to prevent her debarrassing herself of the various wraps which completely concealed her from general observation.

"Oh! on no account let me interrupt so interesting a game," said Lady Latimer, finding that such a proposal had been made by Germain, and objected to by some of the others. "I mean with Lady Boreton's permission, to stay and warm my fingers at this fire for more than sufficient time for you to decide it."

So commanded, Germain resumed his cue, and as he sometimes played with great execution, made a

brilliant stroke. "I'll bet any one five to four on the stick," said Sir Gregory Greenford, who had arrived that morning.

"I'll take it five-and-twenty to twenty," said Lord Latimer, in the mildest tone, and with the most careless manner, his quick eye having observed that Germain played by no means a safe game. Accordingly, his next stroke was a failure. Fitzalbert made much of a see-saw losing hazard at the middle pocket. When that was worn out, and whilst Germain in his turn was taking a deliberate aim, he heard Lady Latimer inquiring who he was. He involuntarily raised his eye from the table and met hers—

"Who says she wants countenance?" thought he; and with that thought he played—missed his adversary's ball—holed his own—lost the game—Lady Latimer retired to dress—and Lord Latimer pocketed Sir Gregory Greenford's pony.

CHAPTER XI.

I will instruct my sorrows to be proud,
For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.

SHAKESPEARE.

“AND what has become of Mr. Oakley since his late acquisition?” was one of the first questions Lady Latimer asked of Germain. Perhaps the reader may share her ladyship’s curiosity upon that subject, and may wish for more detailed information than Germain had then an opportunity of giving in reply.

It was impossible for any two places to be more different in every respect than those to which Oakley had succeeded by the same event—Rockington Castle and Goldsborough Park; the first of which had been subject to all the caprices arising from the actual presence of its late strange proprietor; the other had enjoyed the benefit of the delegated authority of a more rational agent. If the farms upon the Goldsborough estate, when accidentally vacant, were always in the greatest request amongst agriculturists; if the relations between landlord and tenant were here so well understood as for the two parties to be convinced that their interests were concurrent, not conflicting—this was entirely owing to the excellent management of Mr. Gardner, who conducted affairs in Lord Rockington’s name quite differently from the way in which he would have conducted them himself, and therefore as beneficially as possible. He was indeed one of the best specimens of a practical agriculturist; a perfect knowledge of his subject being joined with an anxious desire to do the best for his employer, an endea-

vour that was more likely to be successful, as he was free from the blind ignorance and self-interest combined which are apt to defeat their own object. The park was perfectly well kept up, as were the rest of the grounds, gardens, &c.; and the house, though a small one, had always been used by Mr. Gardner as his own residence, was in perfect repair, and fit for immediate habitation.

There was something in all this, which Oakley could not understand; for, as he approached the place, leaning back in his postchaise, and brooding over past events and future prospects, the one thing that he had settled in his mind as quite beyond dispute, was, that the uncontrolled agent of such a property as Goldsborough must be a rogue. He had contrived several cunning devices, by which he would detect him if he was a clever rogue, and had rather enjoyed the idea of the summary expulsion he would inflict if he should be a palpable scoundrel.

But, in spite of all this prepossession, there was a frankness in Mr. Gardner's first *abond* which puzzled him, till he succeeded in persuading himself that it must arise from the consummate assurance of long-undetected villainy. Having accepted Mr. Gardner's offer of using his servants, &c. till the arrival of his own establishment, it was still with jaundiced eyes that Oakley witnessed the little comforts of this contented man's adopted home, all of which he looked upon as so many fraudulent appropriations out of what ought to have been his inheritance. Even Mrs. Gardner's self-satisfied allusion to her scientific care of the garden, he perverted into a bare-faced acknowledgement that she had made the most of it. In riding the boundaries with Mr. Gardner, the friendly greeting which that gentleman received from every one they met, arising from a long experience of kind and neighbourly offices at his hands, Oakley attributed to the intimacy arising from the common partnership in his spoils.

"That the piece of rising ground, with that oak grove upon it facing your house, is freehold property, Mr. Oakley," said Mr. Gardner; "it would be a very desirable acquisition to you, and is at present upon sale."

"Not mine? to be sure it ought to be. To whom does it belong?" inquired Oakley.

"The proprietor is an acquaintance of mine; indeed, a sort of connexion of Mrs. Gardner's."

"Hum!" said Oakley, who was now convinced he saw through it all.

"The ground is, fairly speaking, worth some more years' purchase to you than to any one else."

"Hum!" repeated Oakley.

"Perhaps, as it is shortly to be put up to auction, and the affair therefore presses, you would authorize me to offer, which I could easily do, something more than what, at a fair valuation, it might be worth to an indifferent person."

"Not the fraction of a farthing, Mr. Gardner," answered Oakley.

Mr. Gardner, though rather surprised, thought he had done his duty, and dropped the subject, which was never resumed between them: How far Oakley's suspicious nature was here an advantage to him, will hereafter be seen.

It was in such a state of mind, pampered too with fond indulgence, whilst chewing the cud of such congenial food as twenty years unaudited accounts afford, that Germain found his friend, when Fitzalbert, on his way to Boreton Hall, dropped him at the park-gate. It was no wonder then, that Germain did not prolong his visit beyond the one night he had originally intended, but hastened to rejoin more lively society; and Oakley remained some time longer undisturbed in trying to detect fresh grounds for suspicion.

There were some circumstances connected with one of the annual items contained in Mr. Gardner's accounts, which might have been supposed to require explana-

tion even by a more candid or careless auditor than Oakley. This was a yearly sum of 500*l.* mentioned as paid over by order of Lord Rockington to a banker at a neighbouring country town. Now it so happened that this banker was also a connexion of Mrs. Gardner's, which was found out by Oakley from his bearing the same name with the gentleman who owned the freehold. Mr. Gardner, however, protested utter ignorance of the purpose to which the money was applied, the banker never having communicated with him on the subject. But, on the other hand, he could produce no other authority for the annual payment, than that he had been desired by his predecessor to continue what he represented himself as having been ordered by Lord Rockington to do. He had once endeavoured to obtain from Lord Rockington more precise instructions on this, as well as other subjects, but the only reply he received consisted of these words:—"Communicate with me only in figures—not letters." "As to this payment, it will now be my duty," said Mr. Gardner, "to obtain for you all the information in my power—to morrow I should have had to make a quarterly remittance of it. I will at the same time make the necessary inquiries."

"Stop it, and say nothing. If this leads to explanation, 'tis well; if not, I shall know what to infer."

This happened a few days previous to Germain's visit. A few days more had passed after it: nothing had been heard with regard to the stopped annuity, and Oakley was beginning to feast upon the certainty that he had detected Mr. Gardner in bare faced appropriation, when a packet, in a woman's hand, was forwarded to him from Messrs. Maxwell's office, and it was with no small surprise that he read as follows:—

"It is only from an anxious desire to ensure a patient perusal of what I have to communicate, and from no vain hope of avoiding the bitter humiliation which this act must entail upon the writer, that I have many

times thrown down my pen dissatisfied with any attempt even at opening the subject. Utterly unknown as I am to you, I feel that you may be as little disposed to believe, as I am to mention as a boast, that if the utter destitution of *myself* alone was effected by the stoppage of the annuity you have withdrawn, I should a thousand times have preferred a silent acquiescence to saying what I have to say. But it is one of the difficulties of the appeal I have to make to you, that founded as it must be, upon the disclosure of disgraceful facts, I have no right to blend them with the assumption of credit for those better feelings, which under other circumstances, I trust you would not be disposed to refuse.

"The person who is attempting to muster courage sufficient to send you this paper, though the daughter of a general officer in the British army, is not a native of these islands, but of a very different climate, and educated in a very different society from that to which her father's rank might have entitled her, had he remained at home. It was in one of our distant colonies that I was born, and it was as the idol of its small circle, that I was brought up. I need no further disclaim any vestiges of vanity as to the personal admiration I then excited, than by owning, that it is now twenty years since I first began to overrate their value. I owe no gratitude to that which was the cause, first of my union with a man older than my father, one of the principal government officers of the colony, and afterwards of all my subsequent errors and disgrace.

"But, though with a feeling far removed from pride, I must, (to enable you at all to comprehend what I have to say,) acknowledge that for many giddy years I reigned in undisputed possession of the admiration of all the small society in which I moved. Lord Rockington's appointment as governor, which followed some political movements which had passed utterly unheeded by me, was an event which seemed

likely completely to change the state of society in the settlement. His arrival had been preceded by that of many officers and their wives and daughters, belonging to the enlarged staff which his appointment entailed.

"Amongst these ladies, to my surprise, I found, not only pretensions of declared rivalry, but an air of decided superiority, founded upon their arrival from Europe. You have never seen, you cannot imagine, the rancorous jealousies to which an insulated settlement is subject. There are many virtues honourable to human nature, which are peculiarly found in such a state of society; but it is also impossible to conceive by what trifles the worst passions are there excited.

"The new state of things produced by these recent additions to the society, had almost frenzied my frivolous mind, when the arrival of Lord Rockington himself again completely revolutionized every thing. It pleased him from the first, to single me out as the undisputed leader of the courtly circle by which he was surrounded. What he then was, and how far the undisguised homage of such a man was calculated to fascinate a foolish weak woman, who had never before even seen any one of his distinguished rank and reputation, I will not pretend to plead; there are, if fame be not more than usually false, in more exalted circles, living witnesses of his seductive arts. But, shame upon me! the mere recalling of events so long past, seems to have conjured up with it all those bad feelings I had hoped were for ever eradicated.

"Let me escape any further detail of, or comment upon this part of my subject. I had no excuse; I could not call it love—all the evil passions of my nature, for a while united in their victory over better feelings and principles. The intoxication was short-lived: my husband, who had been absent in a distant part of the colony, abruptly returned. His suspicions were excited, and eagerly confirmed by those whose

envy had been kindled by my guilty elevation. My innocent child, my only comfort, was born but to be denounced and disclaimed by its legal parent. My disgrace, of course, immediately followed, and was but the forerunner of the ruin of that distinguished individual, who had rather dazzled my imagination, and triumphed over my passions, than won my heart. My husband was one of the principal instigators of his threatened impeachment: in the excited state of our disorganized society, there were plenty found to back his accusations: whether they were well-founded or not, is out of my power to decide; it is sufficient to remember, that they were successful; and is it but justice to him to say, that even whilst writhing under that degradation, which his proud spirit must have rendered insupportable, the arrangements of that allowance which you have stopped, was the last act which showed sympathy with his kind.

“Now, Mr. Oakley, if in what I have related you have seen any symptoms of a weak desire to extenuate my guilt, or to work upon your feelings, by finding out subtle excuses for my conduct—then heed not the earnest appeal I am about to make, not for myself, but for one whom I should not, even after another twenty years of bitter repentance, be worthy to describe as she deserves,—the best, kindest, and most affectionate of daughters. But if you can enter into the bitter feelings of humiliation with which I have avowed myself to an utter stranger such as I was, then perhaps you will credit the assurance, that the fatal errors of my own early life have not been without their due impression, and that the harrowing recollections derived from them have been but another incitement, to instil better principles into the willing mind of her, who has the misfortune to owe her being to me.

“What the circumstances of her birth were, I am sure you will think I have not done wrong in concealing from my innocent girl. To assume a ficti-

tious name, was a necessary consequence of that concealment. That thus unexplained, she has borne with the utmost cheerfulness, and without ever repining, that life of solitude, to which I have always adhered, is one of the least of her virtues. Accident made her acquainted with a lady, whose friendship her merits obtained her. That at that lady's request I have allowed her, under her protection, to leave me for a while to mix in that society she is so calculated to adorn, I now feel to have been my greatest error in regard to her; for Helen would never submit to move in the world as a dependant beggar. My only excuse is, that at the time I so permitted her, from the mystery with which your uncle's affairs have long been conducted, I was ignorant that the provisions he had made for his child was not legally settled.

"I have finished my irksome task. I have confined myself, as much as the agitation of my feelings would allow, to a statement of facts. I make no request; but hope that at least you will understand the motive of this intrusion by her, who has long been known only as

"EMILY MORDAUNT."

This appeal was, on many accounts, peculiarly calculated to excite Oakley's sympathy. Candour was a quality, the existence of which he was often inclined to dispute, but that once acknowledged, no one was more ready to do justice to its value. The utter absence of any attempt at self-justification on the part of Mrs. Mordaunt, which in her case arose spontaneously from the habitual discipline of a contrite spirit, would, even if only artfully assumed, have been the best method to win his favourable attention.

The idea too, of scrupulously attending to the wishes of his late uncle, would at the present moment, independent of any other consideration, have been one of the most powerful incentives to action. He wished in person to have explained, and apologised to Mrs. Mordaunt for the temporary stoppage of the annuity,

but on communicating through Messrs. Maxwell his desire to do so, he found that it was an effort she wished to be spared.

He lost no time, however, in directing that the settlement should be made legally binding on himself, and grumbled not a little at the delay in the execution of his orders, caused by the cramped movements of his lawyer's fingers, in whose hands the most volatile quill ever plucked from the feathered tribe, would have lost all its former winged properties. Certain it is, that his better feelings had been roused by the appeal that had been made to them. He recurred with satisfaction to the part it had enabled him to act; and whilst he remained in his present solitude, even in the midst of a doubtful "dot and carry one" in a disputed account, an indistinct vision would sometimes cross him of a figure, in whose features the fine outlines of his uncle's portrait were softened into feminine loveliness, and whose gentle eyes beamed with gratitude to her benefactor.

CHAPTER X.

———A wife whose words all ears took captive,
Whose dear perfections hearts that scorn'd to serve,
Humbly called Mistress.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY LATIMER and her protégée were left retiring to dress, and according to generally-established precedent, a full and detailed account ought to be given of the successful result of their labours. But will my fair readers pardon a poor author who owns that it is the dread of their disgust which makes him shun an attempt by which some ignorantly suppose then their favour is easiest won? For though he hopes that, utterly unskilled as he is in these mysteries, he still might manage to avoid such glaring mistakes as those made by some self-constituted authorities on these subjects, who have scandalized the taste of the sex, and volunteered a display of their own ignorance by a description of their heroine either by daylight in the dog-days in a superb dress of rich black velvet, or shining amid December snows in flowing drapery of the finest muslin; yet ever avoiding this Scylla and Charybdis, the writer of these pages is aware he is on dangerous ground. Though he might escape any such flagrant error at the present moment, many months may yet intervene before this meets the public eye; and as he has, like other such ephemeral creatures, his own little unacknowledged hopes of a sort of indefinite immortality, he cannot bear the idea that if he should now so commit himself, when the next return of spring shall enable the universally admitted arbitress of taste to hold her annual court at Longchamp, even on that very day every

pretty pair of Parisian eyes would be averted in contempt from this antiquated and old-fashioned page, and as a necessary consequence, as fast as the post could convey the *Journal des Modes*, that contempt would become universal, not falling alone, as it ought, on his devoted head, but what is of infinitely more consequence, being unjustly shared by the ladies whom he would have thus arbitrarily condemned still to wear the fashions of the bygone year.

He hopes therefore that no more will be expected of him than vaguely to assure his readers that when Lady Latimer had exchanged her travelling-dress, the success of her toilet was justly the admiration of the brilliant circle she found re-assembled to meet her; and that as she was far above any low idea of rivalry, much more than the care which she had bestowed upon her own appearance, had been lavished upon that of the pretty interesting girl who accompanied her, and upon whom she had forced many of her own newest and most becoming ornaments.

Fitzalbert loudly protested that it quite refreshed him to see for the first time any thing so singularly attractive as Miss Mordaunt; but Germain had eyes for no one but Lady Latimer; he had predetermined that she would be the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Nature certainly had been a party to this predetermination, and the charm of those perfections which she had borne from her birth was enhanced by that allurements of manner which cannot be described. Combined with the most perfect propriety of deportment, there was, when she pleased, a softened expression in her bright eye; a subdued tone in her musical voice, which, unmarked by all else, conveyed to him whom she addressed, an irresistible impression of interest.

The effect of this was not lost upon Germain, to whose evident admiration she was by no means insensible. He was good-looking, agreeable, and well-informed, and his newness in the ways of the world was rather an additional merit; when freed from the

first incrustation of *mauvaise honte*, which her easy, gentle manners soon contrived to remove.

He was a welcome neighbour to her at dinner, for from the first she had looked forward to her visit to the Boretons as an unpleasant duty, and the set she had found assembled had, with few exceptions, confirmed that expectation. Fitzalbert to be sure was one of her intimates, but then it was the intimacy of indifference. He too seemed for the present very sufficiently occupied in attempting to overcome the diffidence of her young friend, Miss Mordaunt.

Meantime Lady Latimer's rapidly ripening acquaintance with Germain suffered no check from her other neighbour, Sir John, who, after he had asked her whether she drank wine or liked a screen, offered no further interruption. Where all this while was the anxious eye of Lady Flamborough, whose worst fears seemed confirmed as to the engrossing nature of her daughter Louisa's love of admiration? It reposed with some sort of consolation upon the juxtaposition of Lady Caroline and Sir Gregory Greenford, whose unexpected arrival that day had already, as has been noted above, cost him a *pony*, and now seemed to have exposed him to a renewal of these manœuvres on Lady Flamborough's part, which the abrupt termination of the London season had importunately interrupted.

At the opposite end of the table Lord Latimer and Lady Boreton were mutually engaged with equal art in avoiding to say what they really thought upon a very interesting subject, which had been indiscreetly brought upon the tapis by the literary gentleman from London, unluckily ignorant as he was of county politics. This was no less an event than the long expected advertisement from Mr. Medium, announcing his intention, on account of increasing infirmities, of taking the earliest opportunity of retiring from the representation of the county.

"So," said the Londoner, "I see that you are likely to have a vacancy for the county—Who is expected to succeed Mr. Medium?"

This was a most important question, upon which both Lord Latimer and Lady Boreton had settled in their own minds to meditate much, consult cautiously, decide deliberately, and after all this to communicate formally to each other their separate determinations: instead of which they were summarily required in each other's presence to give an off-hand answer. It was impossible to affect deafness, for though a moment before the clatter and chatter of knives, forks, and tongues, had seemed eternal, just then there had occurred one of those unaccountable pauses which sometimes cause a sudden calm, so that much more gentle tones than those of the pragmatist gentleman who had made the inquiry would have been very sufficiently audible.

Lord Latimer had just drank a glass of wine with Lady Boreton; so that even this ready resource to turn the conversation was no longer open. Luckily, he who had caused the dilemma came to their relief, for not receiving a ready answer to his question, he proceeded with the subject for the sake of introducing which he had propounded it, a critical analysis of poor Mr. Medium's advertisement; where to be sure, for so constitutional a statesman, some sentences were cruelly burdened with a "dead weight" of adverbs and adjectives: and pronouns were arbitrarily intrusted with authority over considerable portions of the address, which are usually supposed in such a case to be themselves governed by a verb.

"It is," continued the critic, "a sufficient proof of the inaccuracies tolerated in our legislative assemblies, that a gentleman who had passed his whole life there, should at this time, being resigning, not have learnt to write better."

Lord Latimer could not help remarking, in an undertone to Lady Boreton, that a person *being* criticizing might have learnt to avoid the worst innovation in the style of modern times. He then continued aloud for fear the critical gentleman should again become curi-

ous: "Poor Medium, he certainly never was much of a purist."

"And yet I doubt," rejoined Lady Boreton, "whether he ever read any book more at a sitting, than others do of a dictionary."

"Or even of a newspaper," added Lord Latimer, "than just to see whether the stupid editor had made any mistake in the name of the cover where his hounds were advertised to meet."

"Well, and what can be more provoking than such a mistake?" said Sir Gregory. Lord Latimer, and Lady Boreton, both felt satisfied that they had succeeded in turning the subject—half the party were soon in full cry with Mr. Medium's hounds, and engaged in the more interesting inquiry, who was to succeed to them, as chronic gout, and rheumatism, were likely to incapacitate the sufferer from his duties as much in the field as in the House.

But though for the present, the necessity of explanation had been avoided, it did not the less impress both parties with the conviction that something ought soon to be settled on the subject. To induce Oakley to come forward, was, as has been stated before, Lady Boreton's best hope, Sir John's insignificance or non-entity being by none more feelingly acknowledged than her ladyship. She had already had the proposal hinted to Oakley, in a manner that she thought the most likely to be attended with success.

Of all the various propositions that can be made to a young man in his situation, there is none as to the motives of which he is so likely to be deceived, or to overrate the advantages of an offer of support, should he be induced to come forward as a popular candidate at a contested election. All Oakley's defects too, whether of temper or disposition, which made him feel uncomfortable in many of the relations of private life, were so many additional incentives to seek distinction in public, and to make politics his resource. In principle he was a decided advocate for universal liberty, tempered only so far as common sense told him re-

straint was necessary; but as he was prepared to carry with him, in whatever character he appeared, the same uncompromising contempt for the opinions of any individuals who differed with him, he was more likely to acquire the somewhat sterile fame of a most unbending patriot, than to be a useful partner in promoting any practical benefit to his country.

However, his exalted station in the county, unblemished character, and commanding talents, made it obvious that a more eligible candidate could not be put forward by any party. The zeal and sincerity of his attachment to the popular side marked him as worthy the choice of the people, if his reserve, hauteur, and coldness, in the intercourse of private life, could be so far subdued as to induce him to take the necessary steps towards obtaining their suffrages. Such as he was, however, Lady Boreton was determined to do her best to bring him in; and he had so far acceded to the arrangement, as to consent to join the present mixed party at Boreton Hall, whose places, as they gradually dropped off, were to be filled by more decided county partizans; and the probable success of the attempt, should he come forward, was then to be discussed amongst them.

As to Lord Latimer, his plans were by no means so far matured as Lady Boreton's. Politics were with him by no means so first-rate a pursuit. He had succeeded to a situation in the world which necessarily entailed a considerable degree of political influence: this he certainly thought it his duty not to abandon, but besides that, the overweening indolence which has been mentioned as obscuring his talents, made him dislike trouble of any kind; but he was, when he could persuade himself to think at all on the subject, by no means an illiberal Tory.

When the question was publicly put as to who was to succeed Mr. Medium, he would have disliked hearing uncontradicted any radical nomination of Lady Boreton's, lest he should be supposed tacitly to concur in it; yet there were many reasons likely to prevent

his taking an active part in thwarting her arrangements.

"Our new neighbour, Mr. Oakley, has promised us the pleasure of his company to-morrow," said Lady Boreton, carelessly, to Lord Latimer, having first carefully so separated this remark from the previous conversation as to prevent his suspecting that the visit was connected with the object of that inquiry. But she need not have feared any such inference on Lord Latimer's part, for the mention of Mr. Oakley in the character of their new neighbour gave quite a different turn to his thoughts and first brought to his recollection the disputed moors above Peatburn Lodge, which had lately been out of his mind, partly from his not having himself been out on the 12th of August, and partly from his thoughts having till lately been much engrossed by important annual business at Doncaster races. It now, however, occurred to him, that in consequence of the transfer of the Rockington property to new hands, a favourable opportunity was likely to arise of effecting an exchange which would remove the offensive intrusion of another man's ground into one of his best beats.

It so happened, therefore, that though dinner had not promised much pleasure to any of the party, almost all arose from the table with agreeable impressions uppermost in their minds. Lady Boreton anticipated in Oakley an uncompromising patriot; Lord Latimer an accommodating sportsman; Lady Flamborough's satisfaction was divided between the actual presence of Sir Gregory Greenford and the expected arrival of Oakley, who might, she now thought, do still better for Jane than Germain. The literary lion had had an opportunity of haranguing, and Sir John had not been expected to talk, a state of things that was mutually satisfactory.

Lady Latimer and Germain had been reciprocally pleasing and pleased; and as for Fitzalbert and Miss Mordaunt, it would be difficult to say which had most puzzled and perplexed the other. That a young per-

son like Helen Mordaunt, to whom society was perfectly strange, should be dazzled and bewildered by Fitzalbert's flow of conversation, was not to be wondered at; but on his part he found it difficult to determine what could be her undeniable attraction. "Is it," thought he, "merely because she is a remarkably pretty girl, with a very distinguished air?" That it partly arose from her being so perfectly natural, never occurred to him as an additional solution of the difficulty.

CHAPTER XI.

Then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE intercourse of society is maintained by a sort of tacit compact between the few who are determined to have their own way, and the many who consent to allow it them. If it were not thus, there would be numberless contests about things very little worth the trouble of contention. Of course, in these two classes there are various degrees, and he who leads in one society will follow in another. But I am alluding only to that temper of mind which disposes a man, when among his equals, to drive or be driven; as one of these relative positions sounds much pleasanter than the other, one would imagine that it would be desired by every one who could attain it.

This, however, is far from being the case. Nor is the right to have one's own way, and the power of making others acknowledge it, founded on any well-grounded claim. It is generally a matter of unaccountable assumption on the one part, and concurrent concession on the other.

To be such a privileged person seems to depend merely upon a man's own taste and temper; and to the success of the attempt it is only necessary that some sort of passport should be possessed which secures admission into society, and prevents another's power of "cutting dead," an alternative that would, if possible, be gladly adopted by all; but this danger avoided, the enjoyments of sheer selfishness seem manifold. Wherever such a person goes, the ninety and nine easily satisfied guests are neglected, to study the price of him

who is hard to please; he may indulge uncontradicted in infinite paradox, any thing being considered preferable to endless dispute. If after a course of such studied indulgence, he should condescend to be agreeable, every one is at once in ecstasies of gratitude, exclaiming; "How very delightful Mr. So-and-so, can be!" whereas, if a systematically good-natured man is ever provoked, by an unlucky concurrence of circumstances, to commit himself by losing his temper, he is sure never to hear the last of it.

But the privileged person is not without some little drawbacks upon the advantages of his situation, sitting as he does like an incubus upon the spirits of society: he finds himself artfully omitted from any very pleasant party; and if chance should ever cause him to linger near an open door, or any such social trap for sincerity, he is not unlikely to hear himself talked of without that restraint which the love of a quiet life, and the dislike of a needless quarrel, felt by all prudent people, may have caused in his presence.

Oakley was as yet by no means sufficiently known to have established himself irrevocably in either of these classes, but the character which he had acquired at college, and rather confirmed by the report of the few persons whom he did not succeed in avoiding at Paris, was that of "a stiff sort of fellow, whom it was very difficult to make out; clever enough, certainly, but was nothing off-hand about him."

This opinion, which had originally been thus elegantly expressed by some jolly companions, for whom he had not attempted to conceal his contempt, had been substantially repeated with some variation in the terms, whenever his name was subsequently mentioned; and it was on this that the general expectation in the minds of the party at Boreton Hall, who were awaiting his arrival, was founded. The importance attached to his adventitious acquisitions prevented his being allowed to drop in as an indifferent item in the party; it became necessary either to reckon upon him

as a valuable addition, or to dread him as a bugbear, and the latter alternative was generally adopted.

It was in consequence of this, and the disposition it produced, rather to avoid his neighbourhood, that accident placed him, on the first day of his arrival, by the side of Miss Mordaunt. He had not heard her name, and the resemblance to his uncle, which had he done so could not have failed to strike him, was not strong enough at once to explain itself to him as the cause of the interest he felt in addressing her. The young lady, though as usual, much engrossed by her other neighbour Fitzalbert, whose ever-ready rattle still amused her, would not agree with him afterwards, that Oakley had by any means, a forbidding countenance, or that his smile at all partook of the nature of a sneer; perhaps this difference of opinion may have arisen from that which passed by the common name of smile, not having been a precisely similar movement of the lips towards these two different persons.

Oakley hastened to inquire of Germain, the name of the young lady who had been sitting next him.

"Oh," said Germain, "it's Miss —; Lady Latimer always calls her Helen; Miss — let me see — one never remembers a name when one is asked. Don't you think Lady Latimer a most beautiful woman?"

"Very handsome, certainly; but for my part, I admire much more the lady she is talking to; there is a great likeness between them, the one without any thing in her hair."

"That's her sister, Lady Jane; a very pretty, and a very delightful person, but one not to be compared to Lady Latimer. There is no accounting for tastes. There's Fitzalbert, who sometimes takes strange fancies into his head, says, that he doesn't think either of them as pretty as that Miss Mordaunt."

"Miss Mordaunt?" eagerly inquired Oakley.

"That's the young lady you were inquiring about."

—Miss Mordaunt; she came here with Lady Latimer, who——”

“One word, Mr. Oakley,” said Lady Boreton, coming up between the two friends, and interrupting the opportunity they would otherwise have had, the one of talking about Lady Latimer, the other of thinking about Helen Mordaunt. If Oakley had been better acquainted with Lady Boreton, he would have had a more adequate horror of the interminable nature of her “one word,” but as it was, he quietly submitted to follow her to a sofa in a remote corner of the gallery, and to confine, as far as possible, his attention to her ladyship’s somewhat digressive confidences on the subject of county politics.

At length her “one word” having proceeded at the rate of half a word an hour, he was released for the evening; and then, when he retired to his own apartment, the impressions made by the really important communications on the subject of the coming election, which he had been able to extract from Lady Boreton’s somewhat chaffy reasoning, occasionally gave place to the pleasure he felt at thus unexpectedly meeting one with whom circumstances had already somewhat mysteriously connected him, and whose appearance seemed so well calculated to confirm the predetermined favourable bent of his imagination.

The next morning, after breakfast, Lady Flamborough, having first contrived some occupation for her two unmarried daughters, which should prevent their being in the way, led Lady Latimer to her boudoir, being anxious to have a private interview with her, which she meant should partake of the mixed character of asking advice and giving a lecture. For since Louisa’s marriage, and the consequent abrogation of maternal authority on the part of Lady Flamborough, the usual relations between mother and daughter had become a little confused, and the mother was certainly the most to blame for any failure of that filial respect which might have been hers, had she not herself shown that she considered her own claims on that score infe-

rior to the deference due to Lady Latimer's artificial position in the world.

She had also lost much of her influence over her daughter, from the latter having afterwards discovered some of the little manœuvres by which her mother had attempted to promote her union with Lord Latimer, and as, whatever her other faults might be, she was herself sincere and single-hearted even to an extreme, she could not but feel dislike at the means her mother had employed, even before she became sensible that the end thus attained had far from contributed to her own happiness. Not that one can therefore defend the playful malice with which she sometimes endeavoured to defeat her mother's management for her sisters, for if her opinion of the mischievous effect it was likely to produce, would not justify her in being the person to interfere, it must also be confessed, that her own eager love of admiration was sometimes not without its share in inducing her to make the attempt.

In spite, however, of the little annoyances of this description which she sometimes gave her mother, Lady Flamborough was well aware, that the brilliant éclat of her eldest daughter cast a reflected lustre upon her sisters, and that if she could persuade her, which she had often in vain attempted, to assist her in procuring for them suitable establishments, she would be a most valuable auxiliary in any such scheme.

It was to make one more effort of this kind, as well as to hint, if possible, that she ought not herself to take possession of Germain, that she had summoned her to her boudoir.

"I wished to consult you, my dear," she began; "but, first let me look at that beautiful cap—Herbault's. I perceive. I am not sure, that I quite like the colour of those ribbons."

"It is quite new, however, and aptly entitled, *feu d'enfer*," said Lady Latimer.

"Well, you are certainly looking remarkably well, quite a different thing since I saw you in London;" kissing a cheek, the brilliancy of whose hue, even

the trying neighbourhood of *feu d'enfer* could not injure. "But," added she, "I wish to consult you about Sir Gregory Greenford's attentions to Caroline; his following her here certainly must mean something."

"Do you think so? He is generally most inexplicably void of meaning. But, how do you know he followed her?"

"Oh, who can doubt it? He must have known that Lady Boreton would never have asked him on any other account: he is not at all in her line. But what I wished to say is this—that as Sir Gregory is soon going to Newmarket with Lord Latimer, I thought a word, a hint from him on the subject, might do great good."

"My dear mamma, depend upon it if Latimer takes that opportunity of trying upon Sir Gregory his talents at match-making, it won't be in the *matrimonial* line; and as I don't perceive the advantages of any description that I am to gain from having such a fraternal fool for the rest of my life, you must excuse my interfering in the business."

"Surely you cannot be indifferent to the prospect of such an advantageous establishment for Caroline; for you must recollect, that she is only two years younger than you; and years count quite differently in a girl," added she, observing from a glance Lady Latimer cast at the glass, she did not think her mother's mode of reckoning, judicious. "Besides, she is not near so generally admired as Jane, who grows more like you every day. As to her, though you do not approve of Sir Gregory Greenford for Caroline, I think you will not have the same objection to Mr. Germain for Jane."

"Mr. Germain for Jane!" repeated Lady Latimer, in a tone in which was meant to be expressed that this surpassed even the usual latitude of improbability taken by her mother in these speculations.

"Yes, before you came, every one remarked the evident attention he paid her; and when I asked him

last night if he did not see the strong resemblance between you two, you can't think how confused he was, as he replied that Oakley had just observed it to him. Now, though most worldly mothers would think differently, I would rather see Jane married to Mr. Germain than Mr. Oakley, with all his wealth. There is something singularly disagreeable to me in that young man. I merely told him, that I had heard so much of the splendour of the late Lord Rockington's jewels, that I should be delighted to see them. 'When they are for sale or rather barter, you shall have the earliest notice,' was his answer. Now, it was not so much what he said, for I don't exactly know what he meant, but there was something in the tone of his voice that was offensive. Your new protégée, Miss Mordaunt, however, did not seem to think so. You know, I never can find fault with any conduct of yours, or else I might say, that it was not very kind to your sisters to bring that girl to a party of this kind as a rival to them. And Fitzalbert, who is certainly losing his good taste, crying her up so ridiculously, is sure to have its effect with all those young men who allow him the trouble of thinking for them."

"Helen wants no such panegyrist," said Lady Latimer warmly; "but make yourself easy, mamma, it shall be my task to take care she does not engross Germain; and as for Mr. Oakley, she is a great deal too good for him. I quite agree with you, that he is one of those whose concurrence is even more grating than some people's contradiction. Latimer wished me to be civil to him, on account of some estate which he wants him to exchange about Peatburn Lodge. Dear pretty Peatburn, shall I ever see you again?" added she, with something approaching to a sigh, "and my poor neglected rosebuds too! Alas! they contained not the only hopes which then blossomed but to fade;" and she paused a moment, as if cherishing the recollection of the sole semblance of domestic happiness she had ever enjoyed.

They had retired there for the shooting season soon after the expiration of their honey-moon; and though Lord Latimer was out upon the moors all the morning, he always appeared to return with as much eagerness as he went out; and if she might then have expected more, she certainly had since experienced less. The unsophisticated sameness of the simple recreations with which she had then contrived to while away his absence, had in her remembrance acquired a charm from all that had since intervened.

"How happily could I pass all the rest of my life in that secluded dell, only that——" she paused, but she might have added, "only that one half of it is predestined to social dissipation in London, the other to dissipated society in the country. If, however, a year should ever be made with thirteen months, she thought she would pass the thirteenth at Peatburn Lodge.

"And now, mamma, as you have no more daughters to marry, you must let me leave you, for Helen will be lost in this strange house, and be wondering what has become of me."

But Helen was not one who ever found any difficulty in occupying herself, and she had been employing the morning very much to her satisfaction in writing to her mother an account of all that had happened since her arrival. And as she never had any concealment from her, she meant to be perfectly explicit in the detail of all her own impressions and feelings, as well as the manners and appearance of others.

In furtherance of this intention, she had certainly recorded many more of Fitzalbert's bad jokes than with a little more knowledge of the world she would have thought worth communicating; nor was it her fault if she was not quite so candid in all she thought of Oakley: for how could she put upon paper that she fancied, in addressing her, his smile was softer and kinder than that he bestowed upon the rest of the world?—And this was all she had to tell.

CHAPTER XII.

Warwick. I love no colours; and without all colour
Of base insinuating flattery,
I pluck this white rose, with Plantagenet.
Suffolk. I pluck this red rose, with young Somerset,
And say withal, I think he had the right.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was a few days after the foregoing interview between Lady Latimer and her mother, that Lord Latimer, beckoning Fitzalbert aside after breakfast, communicated to him the unsuccessful result of the request he had made to Oakley to open a negotiation on the subject of the exchange of the moors about Peatburn Lodge.

"I never in my life," said his lordship, "saw such a cross-grained curmudgeon; his only answer was, that he felt it his duty to preserve his uncle's property such as he had left it to him."—"But, my dear fellow," said I, "this is quite unconnected with all the rest of your property—a useless waste without a house on it. I shall be always most happy to receive you at Peatburn Lodge whenever you like to pay me a visit; but as to shooting on that ground from your own house, you can no more do it from thence than could your honoured uncle himself from wherever he now is. I own I was wrong to say that, Fitz, but I could not help it, though I felt it at the time. Well, the look it produced from him was one of which I have not seen the like since I got out of the lower school at Eton; and saying that the reasons of my request were so trivial, that he would not willingly be compelled to take any thing seriously in the treatment of such a subject, therefore he would only reply that I had his answer—he left the room."

"A most statesman-like full stop, indeed," said Fitzalbert. "He fancies he has already got into the House; or perhaps this was only his conciliating manner of asking for your vote and interest."

"How do you mean?" inquired Lord Latimer; "has he any intention of coming forward in the place of Mr. Medium?"

"I have no doubt on the subject," replied Fitzalbert. "You know, being no politician myself, I sometimes am, unheeded, allowed to overhear half-expressed confidences on the subject; such as the necessity yesterday enforced by Lady Boreton, of his sitting next the squinting red-haired Miss Martin, (the only daughter of Martin and Co's manufactory,) whom they had brought back with them, after driving over in the morning to see his new steam-mill—rather a suspicious expedition itself—which will end in something more than smoke, depend upon it."

"But I will never give my support to such an unlicked cub—let him mark down all the votes he'll get from me among the barren bogs he is so anxious to keep. A red-hot radical too, I'm told!"

"Yes, and a moderate man like you will find his opinions equally well represented by such a factious firebrand as Oakley, and such a furious bigot as Mr. Stedman, the old member. Well, as I said, I am no politician, but I can't help thinking it but befits a gentleman to move methodically forward with the main body of the age in its regular march of mind, neither seeking foolish forlorn-hopes in advance like Oakley, nor lagging disgracefully in the rear like old Stedman and those who think with him. I care for none of them. To me the *sans culottes* of the jacobin, and the orthodox *leathers* of the old school, are alike unseemly. You, who are stuck up as a pillar of the state, ought to think more seriously of these things than I, who am but a bit of useless cornice overhanging the surface of society."

"Begging your pardon, Fitz, I think the most valuable privilege of 'a well-deserving pillar' of the 'or-

der' to which I belong, is that which exempts me from thinking any more than if I were stone indeed. The drudges of the lower house are obliged, if not to hear before they decide, at least to wake before they can vote. Many a time has 'my voice potential, double as the duke's,' carried a question, not after a debate in Parliament, but after a rubber at Newmarket."

"But I don't want you to take any further trouble than just to enter your proxy in the other House too. 'Tis a luxury that belongs to your rank and fortune, as much as a second carriage."

"Well," answered Latimer, "I should have no objection to that, only a county member is an article of rather expensive manufacture; and that unlucky filly having won the St. Leger makes it a little inconvenient."

"To be sure it's no business of mine," said Fitzalbert, "but I'll tell you a plan that has occurred to me, which you may think on at your leisure. What do you say to Germain? he has a very good, though not a first-rate property in the county, and plenty of ready money from his long minority; brought forward on your interest he might succeed without costing you any thing. I don't know much of his political opinions, but I should think they were malleable enough to satisfy you."

This proposal had many recommendations to Lord Latimer; he was in a state of mind very much to enjoy any thing that had a tendency to thwart Oakley; but like most gentlemen who love their ease, he had a great horror of being brought into constant collision with disagreeable people; and it was only the having to do with a person so much to his mind as Germain, that could reconcile him to embarking in such an undertaking. But when he sounded Germain on the subject, under a strict injunction of secrecy, the latter rejected it at once, with more decision than he had previously shown on any occasion; saying that he was himself utterly unfit for it, and that if it was to oppose Oakley, of whose intention of coming forward he had

however not been informed, that would be an additional objection.

And thus matters rested for some time. Lord Latimer was satisfied with himself at having made an effort to overcome his usual inaction in such matters, and went to Newmarket, leaving Lady Latimer to be taken up on his return homewards. This was not an arrangement Lady Boreton had anticipated, though she had herself originated the proposal; in fact, it rather embarrassed her political schemes by keeping up the mixed character of the party; but, on the other hand, it had its advantages; it prevented any suspicion of the existence of an electioneering cabal, and whilst Lady Latimer and Germain were allowed to enjoy each other's society, they were not very likely to interfere with any of the Simpkinses or Jenkinses, who, in the character either of busy agents or officious partisans, were constantly coming to consult Lady Boreton and Oakley.

But the best kept secret will sometimes, as it were, escape under ground, and ooze out at a distance; and that which had remained a mystery carefully concealed from Lord Latimer whilst under Lady Boreton's roof, he found perfectly well known at Newmarket, where Jack Stedman, a relation of the old member, and one of the staunch squirearchy who were determined to defend his seat, took hold of Lord Latimer's button at the moment he was most impatient to hedge some indifferent bets, and let him into the determination of his party in the county, by no means to acquiesce in the nomination of Oakley. Rather than allow him to come in without a contest, they intended to start another of their own friends, to split votes with Mr. Stedman; but as they were not anxious to make the attempt to monopolize the two seats, they were ready to give their second votes to any one who might come forward on Lord Latimer's interest; for though they did not acknowledge him as quite true blue, there was no comparison between the incipient symptoms of scepticism with which he was af-

flicted, and the inveterate heresy of such a man as Oakley.

Lord Latimer having paid dearly for these arguments of Jack Stedman, as they prevented his seizing the opportunity to get out of an awkward betting scrape, he thought it as well to make the most of them, and therefore brought them back with him to Boreton Hall, and made use of them in persuading Germain to revise his determination not to come forward himself for the county; telling him that as far as he might have any scruples in opposing Oakley, the present state of affairs ought to remove those, for that it was now obvious that he would not come in without opposition, and if two of the Stedman party united, the run would of course be entirely against him; whereas he, Lord Latimer, had refused to make any stipulation of mutual support with either party, and provided his own friend succeeded, it was a matter of indifference to him which of the other two came in.

Germain had been from the first rather more positive in declining the proposal, than decided in his dislike to it; and even had this feeling been originally stronger, it was not in his nature to resist repeated solicitation, particularly when many of the collateral circumstances, which would necessarily arise from his acquiescence, were every way so agreeable to him; amongst these, not the least of the advantages which he anticipated, was the confirmed intimacy it must produce with the Latimers.

When, therefore, Lady Latimer's persuasive tones were joined with those of her lord's, in attempting to convince him, he found it impossible any longer to resist; not that her arguments were very elaborate on the subject, but she not only chose the colours for him, but wore them herself that evening; and her bright eyes shone brighter, and her dark hair looked darker from the bows of the *fue d'enfer* ribbons, which she had chosen as becoming to herself, and wore as complimentary to him.

The compunction which Germain might otherwise have experienced at finding himself almost committed in opposition to Oakley, was not a little relieved by the suggestion which he derived from Fitzalbert—whom he consulted on the subject—that if there was any breach of friendship between them, the blame must rest with Oakley himself; the reserve and closeness of whose disposition had prevented his ever communicating his long-formed intentions to his friend and relation, who was living under the same roof with him, and whose property was so situated that his support, if asked, might be of the greatest service to him. “Under these circumstances,” added Fitzalbert, “I think you perfectly at liberty either to affect ignorance of his project or not, as may best suit your purpose.”

But that was not at all Oakley's view of the proceeding, when it accidentally came to his knowledge. He had long necessarily delayed a public declaration of his own intention, principally from a dislike to entering upon the duties of canvassing, which he felt must necessarily follow, and which he looked forward to as the most irksome part of the whole business. Perhaps, too, he had more reasons than he owned to himself for preferring, at present, a protracted stay with the society at Boreton Hall, to riding about, making the agreeable to all the disagreeable people in the county.

The morning after Germain had yielded to the desire of his friends, that he should start as a candidate for the county, Oakley had retired to the writing corner of the library; he had at last made up his mind to put forth his public advertisement; somehow or other he had not made any very rapid progress in this production; what the peculiar nature might be of those reveries which had so long kept his pen stationary, need no further be defined, than by owning that the sudden appearance of Helen Mordaunt produced an abrupt transition in his turn of thought.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Oakley,” said she, stop-

ping suddenly, "but I thought it had been Lord Latimer, and I came to ask him to frank this letter to my mother."

"Your mother! you write frequently to her," inquired Oakley, forgetting that Helen was ignorant of that communication between himself and Mrs. Mordaunt, which could alone explain so strange a question from him.

"Every day since I have been separated from her," replied Miss Mordaunt. "When we are together we are all the world to each other; therefore it would be hard now not to enliven her solitude with a little of my social superfluity, even at the risk of tiring her with my voluminous gossip."

"Valuable, indeed, must be the power to preserve a record of the first impressions made by all she sees upon such a mind as Miss Mordaunt's," said Oakley; "the interest of the source from which your communications are derived, must soften the painful feelings which must otherwise be excited in your mother's mind, to find the world still what she left it—with a ready hand for the buoyant, a heavy heel for the fallen. But," added he, recovering himself as he became aware that he was hinting his knowledge of Mrs. Mordaunt's actual situation, "I am sorry that I cannot assist you with a frank."

"Perhaps before long you may. I don't know whether I should say I hope so—you know I cannot be against Lady Latimer, and Mr. Germain himself is so good-humoured, that it is impossible not to wish him success in any thing he attempts."

"Mr. Germain!" said Oakley, starting up. "Can it be possible that he is to be my opponent?"

"Perhaps I have said what I ought not," interrupted Miss Mordaunt, alarmed at his vehemence. "I heard it mentioned without any injunction of secrecy, yet I dare say I have done wrong to repeat it. My own utter ignorance of all such subjects must be my excuse. I can now understand the horror my mother has always expressed at the very name of politics,

since an allusion to them from one so innocent of offence as I am, can be capable of producing such an effect."

"Oh, Miss Mordaunt, you are yet so young in years, younger still in the knowledge of the world! your gentle nature could not suspect that baseness of which you have unwittingly communicated the most convincing proof. There was but one person I believed incapable of such duplicity, and him I find conspiring to blast the just expectations of his friend."

"Nay, now, Mr. Oakley, surely this is not fair; ignorant as I am of the subject, I can at least distinguish that what you are contending for is no man's right, but a free object of ambition, open to any one; and I am sure you will recall your imputation of unfairness, when you reflect that what you did not think fit to communicate to Mr. Germain, he could not be obliged to communicate to you."

"And is it possible Miss Mordaunt should be the apologist of such conduct? I had a right to keep my counsel. I could not guess at an intention which he had not then formed; but he having wormed out my secret, has been working in the dark to counteract my plans."

How far Helen Mordaunt's strong sense of justice would have overcome her dislike to an argument, and have enabled her gentle nature to contend against Oakley's unmeasured vehemence of accusation, whether she would have succeeded in convincing him, for the first time in his life, that he was in the wrong, it is impossible to say, for their interview abruptly terminated by Lady Flamborough's entrance.

"Oh, I beg pardon," said she, "if I interrupt any body. Only to put back this portfolio—very prettily copied, is it not, Mr. Oakley? Miss Mordaunt, my dear, Lady Latimer has been inquiring for you, and she will not guess where to find you, for my girls never come into the library in a morning. You will learn all that in time. And just tell White to send me

down my parasol, and take this other portfolio up to my Caroline, that's a good child."

The disgust with which Oakley listened to this attempt, as he thought it, to treat Miss Mordaunt as a menial dependent, and to employ her as a matter of course in convenient offices, had at once the effect of removing any little feeling of exasperation which his irritable nature might otherwise have preserved after their recent dispute. He advanced hastily towards the door, and opening it just in time for the well laden messenger, the smile with which he greeted her in passing was assurance enough that he retained no unkind recollection of what had occurred between them.

Lady Flamborough, it has been remarked, was not very fond of Oakley; she was also not a little afraid of him, but as she passed him at the door she could not avoid saying, "The ladies will expect your services after luncheon, Mr. Oakley; they are now but badly off for any gentleman to ride with them; Mr. Germain's sudden departure this morning has left you undisputed master of the field."

"It is neither my wish, nor my ambition, to imitate Mr. Germain, or to interfere with him in any respect," replied Oakley; and that in a tone which made Lady Flamborough repeat to herself, as she shut the door, "Certainly, the most disagreeable young man I ever knew: and yet, that he should have forty thousand a-year, and Mr. Germain at most only eight—what a pity?"

"Left the house already," thought Oakley; "can it be possible that he has actually declared himself?" The doubt which this reflection implied was soon removed by a servant putting into his hand a letter from Germain, which ought to have been given sooner, as it was left by him when he quitted the house at six o'clock that morning. It was as follows:—

DEAR OAKLEY,

I write this in haste to communicate to you my intention of immediately offering myself as a candi-

date for the county, at the vacancy which will occur at the approaching general election. I should have preferred announcing it to you in person, but as it was only finally decided last night, and you had disappeared before supper, and Lord Latimer's friends were unanimous in thinking it of the utmost importance, that I should not lose the opportunity of showing myself this morning, being market-day at —, I could only leave you these few lines. One of the reasons why I should have been glad to explain myself more fully with you first, was, that it has been rumoured you had some intention of standing yourself; but as this has been some time said, and you have never mentioned it to me, I conclude that the report is unfounded. At any rate, should I be unhappily opposing myself to you, I have the consolation of knowing that you would otherwise have found a more 'stony-hearted adversary;' and I trust I need not assure you, that, consistent with the principles of the party upon whose interest I come forward, you may always depend upon any assistance from

Your faithful friend,

CHARLES GERMAIN.

"Faithful friend indeed! a puppet in the hands of any who please to play upon him," said Oakley.

He read the letter over again, and it enraged him the more; and that not a little, perhaps, from his being unable exactly to find out what just cause of complaint it opened to him. When our intentions have never been expressed, any interference with them, however injurious, is hardly offensive, and therefore can scarcely be considered criminal by any code of friendship. And though he could not help entertaining a vague suspicion that Germain was really perfectly well aware of his project, as was indeed the case, yet not only had he no proof of this, but even if he had, as he never, by communicating it himself, had established a trust, there was no breach of confidence.

He now bitterly repented that he had not taken

Lady Boreton's advice, upon no account to delay declaring himself beyond this identical market-day. He had originally declined doing so from two causes, neither of which he liked to acknowledge: one was, his unwillingness to separate himself from all whom he had met at Boreton Hall; the other, a jealous dislike whilst he remained there, to be paraded in public, as "Lady Boreton's new man." He was very ready to avail himself of that lady's invaluable exertions in his behalf, but he was very anxious that the distinction should be well understood, that she was engaged in his service, not he in hers.

But whatever relative weight these two reasons might have had in producing this unfortunate delay on his part, they could neither now conceal from him the immense advantage that the start would be to Germain, not only with the freeholders, but with that large portion of the world who would judge between them without knowing much of the merits of the case, and with that larger portion still, who without judging at all, personally preferred Germain to him. It gave him the appearance of being the aggressor, and of coming in at the eleventh hour, to crush his former friend with the weight of his purse, ——"and will not even Helen Mordaunt think so too?" was one of his bitterest reflections.

But if it had been an effort to Helen Mordaunt to attempt to prove him in the wrong to his face, she was sure to think him in the right when left to herself. She then found out ample excuses for his vehemence in the indignation excited in a noble mind by the very idea of duplicity, and all that she could not quite justify in his deportment, was effaced by the recollection of the sweetness of the smile with which he had parted from her. Her natural readiness to oblige, had prevented her from being offended at Lady Flamborough's air of protection, in sending her as an errand-girl all over the house; and as Lady Latimer's manner to her was always the per-

fection of considerate kindness, she had never been made aware of her dependent situation in society.

Admiring Oakley as a sort of superior being, she could not but be gratified at the daily consciousness that his manner to her was different from that he maintained with the rest of the world. She had not yet asked herself the cause of this welcome distinction. Sometimes his indistinct allusions and abrupt questions about her mother bewildered her; for that there could be no personal acquaintance between them, she felt assured from her having herself, till within the last few weeks, remained entirely with her. Could she attribute all that she did not understand in his conduct to the interest with which she had herself inspired him?

She opened her letter to her mother, determined to add—she knew not what. Facts she had none to communicate; and of fancies, what would one sheet contain? So she closed it again, sealed, and sent it.

CHAPTER XIII.

And you, that love the Commons, follow me!

SHAKESPEARE.

THE long-expected dissolution of Parliament at length took place. The day of reckoning at length arrived; and M. P. s of every degree were called to render up an account of their conduct, trembling, lest utter extinction should alone suffice to expiate their various offences of every contradictory kind.

One has assisted to perpetuate unrepealed millions, upon an overtaxed constituency; another, neglected to procure an excisemen's place for Mr. Jones's wife's second cousin. The name of one is not found in the last list of minorities; the name of the other was not left with Mr. Mayor last time he was in town. One was squeamish enough to stay away on the night of his patron's pet job; another has been suspected of joint-stockery. In short, offences of every sort occur to the recollection of those who still hope for a resurrection in the new Parliament; whilst the desperate shades of departed legislators, for whom there is no hope to rise again, crowd in shoals across (not Charon's ferry, but) the Dover Channel—a destination arising from no longer having the power to put off bills "six months," whether public or private.

And now that legislation is again out of lease, new bidders start up on every side; here you may see candidates, like children at puss-in-the corner, running about in search of a seat; there, a borough acting on the principles of free trade, awaiting the offer of a third man. Great is the flight of wise men in the East over the western road, hastening to take their

periodical dip in the Cornish mines, whence they may rise re-lacquered as legislators; a process for which that district is peculiarly celebrated. Here you may see an embryo member, who is obliged to spout by the hour, drink by the dozen, kiss by the hundred, squander by the thousand; whilst his next-door neighbour quietly sends for his friend from London, walks with him to his own summer-house as a town hall, where they are proposed by his gardener, seconded by his game-keeper, returned by his butler; who having, as returning-officer, returned his master to the House, returns himself to the sideboard, and the two new members drink their own healths *tête-à-tête*, over a bottle of claret. And yet, though these two modes of proceeding are somewhat different, the production is the same; and they equally mould members of Parliament, who equally become representatives of the people of England. The choice of a whole city, paved with heads and lined with faces, count but the same as the delegate from four dead walls of an old ruin; nay, like Aladdin's lamp, it is often the old and shabby, dirty and despised, that possess this hidden virtue, which would in vain be sought in new, bright, prosperous-looking possessions of the same kind. A village cobbler in one place, may make members according to his own fancy; he and all about him, even to the very *last*: whilst in another, the employer of hundreds of hands, and the proprietor of a square mile of warehouse, is told, that his interests are very safe in the hands of Squire Somebody, the county member, who thinks commerce unconstitutional, and votes against any change in the Corn Laws.

But, although at the dissection of a dead Parliament, one detects all the rotten parts in the composition of its frame, yet, without disputing that it might be better, it is wonderful how well the machine works when put together; particularly when one considers, that patriotism is no more the unmixed motive of coming there, than that popular election is the means by which it is effected. Mr. Scraggs comes in, be-

cause Mrs. Scraggs was afraid that Mrs. Swails should take precedence of her as an M. P.'s lady. One fool wants to frank; another only wishes to go *free* himself. But, perhaps, the reader may think that this analysis may as well be spared of that which is collectively the greatest aggregate of talent, and the nicest criterion of taste, which the age can produce.

Therefore, to return to one of our heroes—(for though the freeholders of the county will be called on to decide between them, I will not acknowledge a preference for either)—it was at the identical inn where they separated before, that Oakley found himself alone, after a hard day's canvassing. He had begun the day with a brilliant speech at a public meeting, held at one of the principal market-towns in the county. The well-merited applause which his sentiments had there elicited from an admiring audience, had produced a sensation of exultation, which had gradually subsided under the wearisome duties of the subsequent canvass, during the last two hours of which, his even more than ordinary taciturnity had by degrees worn out the attendant friends and agents who had accompanied him; and they had severally dropped off, with assurances of being punctual at the place of rendezvous on the morrow. His groom too, he had despatched with an important note to an agent. When therefore, from his horse casting a shoe, he found it would be difficult to reach home that night, he determined to take up his quarters at this inn, which was a sort of neutral ground; for being only a single house in one corner of the county, it had not been taken by any of the parties.

Here, it happened, he was not known personally, and it never was suspected that the name which filled every corner of the county paper, could belong to the faded-looking traveller, who arrived alone, leading a lame horse; and no longer having Germain to claim attention for him, he seemed likely to receive even less of it than formerly from the much more occupied inmates of the inn.

The sight of the room in which he had passed the last evening of fellowship with the companion of his youth, excited under present circumstances an unpleasant train of thought. He was about to enter with him into an eager, if not angry contest; and though this species of public competition is far from necessarily leading to permanent estrangement in private, yet he was too justly distrustful of his own temper and disposition, not to be well aware that his was a soil in which the kindly feelings of our nature are of slow growth, requiring careful culture, and therefore to fear that such matter of exasperation would inevitably arise as must prevent Germain and himself from ever again meeting on those terms on which they had formerly lived. And how was such a friend to be replaced by one of such an unsocial turn as himself?

It has been often truly said, that uniformity of character is by no means necessary or desirable in permanent companionship. Germain's mind was fully capable of doing justice to that of his friend, whilst the playful fancy in which his ideas were decked, served to enliven the somewhat sombre colouring which tinged the thoughts of the other; and the kindly overflowings of his nature washed away the asperities of Oakley's disposition. And now that these ties were severed, what had he as an equivalent? Those with whom he at present associated were persons with whom nothing but a community of interest during a moment of political excitement might temporarily connect him. He had that morning, in the course of his public speech, revelled in those abstract theories of philanthropy and patriotism upon which liberal ideas in politics are founded—but what availed these general doctrines, when he sought in vain for an individual link of sympathy which might connect him with his kind?

True, there was one gentle nature with whom he would gladly have established a claim to sympathy, which if acknowledged, would amply compensate to him for the indifference of the rest of the world; but

here again his evil star seemed to persecute him. He had parted from her in doubt and in darkness, and his present residence not only separated her from him, but placed her in a situation of natural hostility to his wishes.

All this, and much more, from which he had in vain endeavoured to extract comfort, had passed through his mind before the waiter interrupted his reverie by bringing supper. "Beg pardon, Sir," he said; "but we're mortal throng at present with this here election."

That propriety of deportment which is the peculiar characteristic of the present age, has very much narrowed the field which was open to former writers, of detailing familiar communications between different ranks. A dramatist of the present day, for instance, is completely debarred from indulging in that alternation of confidence and caning with servants which formed so much of the dialogue and action of the old plays. If a gentleman now-a-days ever does unbend, it is as likely as not with a waiter at an inn, when, for want of other company, he lets himself out for the night for a few shillings' worth of familiarity.

Oakley, generally speaking, was very little likely to give into even this temporary condescension; but, besides that his own thoughts had not been, as we have seen, very pleasant company, he felt the general, though dangerous desire to which all are subject, to avail himself of an opportunity to hear himself talked over by a person to whom he was unknown.

He therefore detained the waiter, and gave him an opening to continue the conversation by saying: "I should have thought that here you were quite out of the way of the election, and knew or cared nothing about any of the candidates."

His present attendant was not slow to avail himself of the privilege of talking, though not in the flippant frothy style of a southern knight of the napkin, but with the true deliberate drawl of the north country.

"Why, sur, there's not a man, woman or choild in all the country round, but has made a bit of a favourite of one of them; and as for our house, we're no two of a moind here. There's Betty Chambermaid all for Germain, because his colours are prattiest for to look on. Cook's all for ould Squire Stedman, because he's most against the Pope's roasting-alive consarn. As for me, from what I sees in the papers of Squire Oakley's talk, I conceits him the most, only I doubt its all gammon he says."

"Why so?" inquired Oakley.

"Why, you see, he talks a deal about liberty and natural rights, and that all property is only in trust for the public;—well, he's gotten a mortal foine place, and park, and gardens, such as thare's not the loike in the county, and he wont let a living soul get a soight of it, though master might have five pair of horses out a-day, I dare say, of boithing company from—going cross country to see it. And much harm that would do. Then, as to economy which he preaches, I doubt he practises that better: it's nothing to me that for certain, for the more as don't dine with him the more may come here. But I am tould that neither man, woman, or choild, have ever had their trotters under his mahogany."

"Get me some more mutton-chops," said Oakley, whose pleasure in the conversation had quite ceased. The waiter obediently retired, but to return no more, as the arrival of a carriage-and-four more worthily occupied his attention; and the fresh mutton-chops were carelessly consigned to Betty Chambermaid, who, flaunting in a cap covered with Germain's ribbons, tossed them upon the table.

Wearied and dissatisfied, Oakley retired early to-bed to prepare for the fatigues of the next day; but upon coming down in the morning to the sitting-room, where he had been the night before, he found it occupied. Breakfast was already laid, and a lady was standing at the window with her back towards him.

He was hastily retiring, when, upon her turning round, to his surprise he beheld Helen Mordaunt.

"Miss Mordaunt! and alone! Can it be possible?"

"Only alone," said she, "from too implicit a faith in Lord and Lady Latimer's intention of early rising. I arrived here late last night with them; we had been detained on the road for hours, and therefore could not reach——, where we are going, in order to be more in the way of hearing the news of——of——"

"Of the election," added Oakley, observing that she hesitated to mention the subject—"to be ready to triumph in my final defeat, after seeing me die by inches,"—he continued in a tone that was meant, though not very successfully, for careless banter.

"Nay, you cannot wish me seriously to defend myself from such an imputation," she replied, detecting through his assumed pleasantry a little soreness about it. "Or why should that be the feeling of any of our party? You forget that only one need fail, and I am sure I hope that you will come in with Mr. Germain."

"Then, provided he is safe, I may flatter myself that my chance is a matter of indifference to Miss Mordaunt?"

"You are determined, I see, to misconstrue all I say upon the subject; and as that ignorance I have always professed about it makes it the easier for you to do so, I will say nothing more—but let me take this opportunity of conveying to you my mother's thanks for all your kindness to me when we met at Boreton. In a letter I lately received from her, she says, 'Pray tell Mr. Oakley how much his kindness to my child doubles the obligations I already owe him.' You know her then, Mr. Oakley, and have perhaps endeavoured to cheer her occasional melancholy, and wondered with me, why she is not as happy as she deserves to be?"

And what did Mrs. Mordaunt mean by my par-

ticular kindness to you?" inquired Oakley, and for a moment an unworthy suspicion of the mother's manoeuvring for her daughter came across him; but he quickly banished it, as altogether misplaced, and continued: "If it was attempting to monopolize the only society in which I found pleasure, that ought rather to be punished as selfishness, than rewarded with thanks."

In most mouths this would have been a mere commonplace compliment; but Oakley could not have said it if he had not thought it; and therefore the whole tone of its delivery was different, coming from him, and its effect might have been proportionate, but that at this moment Lady Latimer opened the door, and beheld, not a little bewildered at seeing that which of all things that had "a local habitation and a name" she least expected—the full length figure of Ernest Oakley.

"I beg your pardon," said he, rather confusedly; "it was quite an unintentional intrusion on my part. I was shown into the room last night, and returned to it as a matter of course this morning."

"Pray let us profit by the mistake," graciously replied Lady Latimer, "by your staying to breakfast with us. We will not poison you. Breakfast is a notoriously innocent meal; a dinner is more dangerous, and bears the stamp of party. A cabinet-dinner governs our own country; a public-dinner saves foreign patriots abroad; but breakfast is entirely without meaning, and compromises no man's political principles. So pray sit down."

Oakley, excusing himself on the score of hurry, retreated towards the door, and was met on the threshold by Lord Latimer, ushered in by the waiter, who, turning towards him, informed him that his hat was in the traveller's room. Lord Latimer bowed civilly, looking at first rather puzzled, and afterwards not a little amused at the waiter's cool treatment of a man of Oakley's character and importance.

When the mistake was explained to him—"A good

omen!" said Lord Latimer; "we shall be the means of turning him out of another public house too," and after that thought no more about it.

Not so Helen—and yet why should each succeeding interview with Oakley have left a stronger impression upon her? All that he had ever said would hardly amount to an avowal of common-place interest, and yet she felt assured that common-place was not the characteristic of his conduct towards her. Hers was no singular case. If nothing has been here recorded to justify that conviction on her part, it is because it is impossible to try by the test of words that which purposely avoids the responsibility of speech, those thousand little nameless attentions which too often by implying attachment create it in return; whilst, shunning verbal explanation, they evade every thing of the compromising nature of an engagement.

Oakley's conduct, such as it was, had such an effect; though I am far from asserting that it originated in such an intention.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cry the man mercy ; love him, take his offer.

SHAKSPEARE.

GERMAIN in the mean time proceeded prosperously with his canvass; to go through all the various duties of this busy time was to him much less of an effort than to Oakley. Some amused him, others gratified his vanity, and as they all were the source of active occupation and excitement, he never felt happier than whilst engaged in them, which feeling enabled him to perform them not only more easily, but more effectually than if he had considered them as a drudgery.

He evidently rather liked riding about with a concourse of followers, and being a great man wherever he went; and even the cry of "Germain for ever!" with which little blackguard boys strained their tiny throats as he rode through the village, was not altogether an unpleasant sound to him. He was moreover an excellent listener, a first-rate qualification in a candidate; and during the allotted period of each visit, he could sit with a face of intense interest whilst the topics that had been got up for his reception were regularly gone through. It was the same to him whether the subject matter was foreign or domestic—there he sat in silent acquiescence.

He had moreover a ready eye for any thing purposely put up to be admired, whether of furniture or family; and no one had ever the mortification of reflecting after he went away, that any thing done to attract his attention had failed in its object.

He was an amazing favourite with all the young ladies—they hardly knew why. Mr. Oakley was at

least as handsome, but it was Mr. Germain who looked as if he thought them handsome.

One of his most active coadjutors in the business of canvassing, was Mr. Macdeed, the celebrated solicitor of ———, who it will be recollected was excessively offended with the reception Oakley gave him after Lord Rockington's death. His zeal therefore had the double incitement of dislike to the rival candidate, and desire to establish himself in the good graces of Lord Latimer, by whom he had been recently employed, in consequence of the talent he had formerly displayed on the other side, in the famous cause of *Rockington v. Latimer*.

The course of their circuit had brought Germain and Mr. Macdeed to a part of the county which the former full well remembered, when Mr. Macdeed addressed him thus: "I suppose we may as well just call there, though I am afraid it will be to very little purpose; I have him down in my list—'Rev. Mr. Dormer, supposed plumper for Stedman.'"

"I have no doubt you are wrong there," said Germain; "Mr. Dormer is an old and very particular friend of mine."

"Well, we'll try," replied the other, "but I know he has a most particular horror of 'the damnable doctrine.' It is a pity, Mr. Germain, that you and Lord Latimer could not have made up your mind to some sort of vague 'no popery phrases' in your address; you would have been quite safe then, and I would have undertaken to have so worded it that it need not hereafter have been inconvenient under other circumstances."

"It is just as well as it is," was all that Germain replied, his prudence inducing him to repress the indignation he really felt at the proposal. As they approached Rosedale Rectory, though its general view from a distance was still the same, the details disappointed him. Could that be the stile looking into the lane over which he used to lean with Fanny, and that the green path which led to it, all ending in a muddy

puddle? The rector's plantation too was much thinner, and more transparent—why, he was sure one never used to see the pig-stye through it. As they rode up to the door, they passed his study-window and the little garden beneath where he used to see Fanny day after day watering the roses—they had been succeeded by cabbages. This rather touched him—perhaps she had never sought the spot since his departare.

“Poor Fanny!” thought he, “how glad she will be to see me again!”

They were ushered in. Mr. Dormer had walked out into the village, yet Fanny was not alone. They found with her, in what was commonly called the parlour, a short thick-set man, about forty, with rather a bilious tinge, and a bald head and immense whiskers; it would have been impossible to guess at his profession from his dress, for while a new bright-green single-breasted jacket with brass buttons looked rural, a stiff black stock seemed military, while sundry spots of ink upon pale shrunk nankeen trowsers indicated connexion with the counter.

Fanny's cheeks once more rivalled in brilliancy those less congenial spots which in colour had lately eclipsed them, as she advanced to meet Germain, and introduced him to Captain Wilcox, saying at the same time that her father would soon return.

“Won't you please to be seated? Pray take a chair, gentlemen,” said the captain.

Germain bowed assent, saying to himself, “And who, I wonder, are you? I should think I might make myself at home here without asking your leave.”

He recalled the whole line of cousins he had ever heard either Mr. or Miss Dormer lay claim to, and though it had been a topic of rather frequent occurrence, he could not recollect the name of Wilcox amongst the number.

“Seasonable weather,” said Fanny to Mr. Macdeed, on one side of the table.

“Unseasonable weather,” said Captain Wilcox to Mr. Germain on the other; and they had only both

just assented to these contradictory propositions, when Mr. Dormer himself returned, and after shaking hands cordially with Germain, thus addressed Mr. Macdeed: "Mr. Macdeed, I presume; busy time, Mr. Macdeed."

A whisper then passed between him and Fanny, accompanied by the consignment of a key, which led to an immediate jingling of glasses in a corner cupboard in the next room, and to more ostensible effects in a later period of the visit.

Mr. Dormer then drew his chair towards Germain's, and after hemming to clear his voice began: "Mr. Germain, as you are a candidate on your canvass, perhaps it is not too much to presume that it is the object of your visit to request my vote?"

Germain having assented in a few words about the gratifying support of an old friend, and Mr. Macdeed having contrived to edge in "the important point in their favour that it would be," Mr. Dormer resumed:—

"It is my maxim—I may be wrong—that a conscientious man should always act according to his conscience."

"After allowing a pause for contradiction he continued:—

"A public trust can hardly be said to mean private advantage."

Another pause producing acquiescence.

"Those who are most attached to our invaluable constitution, would not wish to destroy it."

"Certainly," said Germain.

"Undoubtedly," added Mr. Macdeed.

"Of all our establishments those which partake of a holy character, ought to be the most sacred."

Still there seemed to Germain to be no room for dispute, though he remembered enough of the illogical nature of his good friend's mind, to know that he disdained the regular steps of reasoning; and that after piling up these disjointed scraps of truism till he had sufficiently exalted himself, he would jump at once to his conclusion, however far he might appear from it.

And so it turned out; for after stringing together a few more sentences—without allowing Germain the opportunity he wished for, of protesting that he yielded to no man in attachment to the Church of England, and that he thought he best supported its interests, and maintained its integrity, by removing from it the stigma of intolerance—he announced his intended support of Stedman as the Protestant champion.

“But,” added he, “I should only half discharge my duty, if I did not recollect that I have another vote.”

“To be sure you would,” said Germain.

“That’s the point at issue, my good friend,” said Mr. Macdeed.

And I am happy to say, Mr. Germain, that my public duties, and my personal feelings here coincide in inducing me to give the preference to you over your competitor.”

Germain expressed himself properly on the subject, but somehow he did not feel as grateful as he ought. It was not only that he would have preferred Oakley to Stedman, and therefore was not quite satisfied, but somehow he had calculated upon being the first object with Mr. Dormer. He could not help thinking, that his old friend used not to be quite so great a twaddler.

“Mr. Dormer has spoken my sentiments too, to a T,” said Captain Wilcox.

“And what right,” thought Germain, “can you have to any sentiments on the subject?”

“You are put up, I believe, by Lord Latimer, sir,” continued the captain; “I should be very happy to oblige his lordship, he spoke so handsomely of our Indian army, in seconding the address in the House of Lords a few years ago. I remember the circumstance, because a friend of mine, at mess, objected to an expression of his lordship’s that that army *ran* second to none on the field of glory. ‘*Ran*,’ said my friend, ‘is an odd compliment,’ but I explained that it was a metaphor borrowed from his lordship’s sporting pur-

suits, and accompanied by many other favourable expressions."

Though the offensive and unconstitutional phrase, "put up by Lord Latimer," was somewhat explained by the long residence in India afterwards admitted, which might account for ignorance on such a subject, yet Germain felt inclined to be angry at his talking at all about it, when Mr. Macdeed skilfully whispered to him; "Just bought a property in the county, (I remember now,) commanding twenty votes."

Germain immediately replied, that he should be happy to take an opportunity of introducing him personally to Lord Latimer, to whose merits he did no more than justice.

Still he felt puzzled to account for the relation in which he stood to Mr. Dormer. For upon the entry of a tray, with wine and cakes, he it was who undertook to do the honours of Mr. Dormer's old port, to which Mr. Macdeed seemed inclined to do even more justice than canvassing civility required; Mr. Dormer, helping himself to a glass, said: "Church and King, Mr. Macdeed; I am sure you would not wish to separate them."

"Only inasmuch as I should prefer two glasses of your port to one," replied Mr. Macdeed, chuckling at his own smartness.

In the meantime Fanny, addressing Germain, said: "Perhaps, Mr. Germain, you think that we know nothing here of your electioneering bustle, but a friend of mine sent me one of the hand-bills about you all yesterday, in which I hope that the omen of your success may be more true than the idea of your character is just."

It was as pointless, and at the same time, as personal as political squibs upon such occasions usually are. It was called, "Effervescent Draught for the County." Oakley was described as the acid, Stedman as the alkali, and Germain the froth which the collision of the other two would make to float at the top.

But if it had been a much more poignant produc-

tion, the contents of that paper would have then had no effect upon Germain, for the envelope that had just been given to him by Fanny was directed to "Mrs. Captain Wilcox!"

Mrs. Captain Wilcox! was it possible that Fanny Dormer, whose taste had once been so refined, whose young heart had once shown a proper sensibility to his merits, should ever have consented to become Mrs. Captain Wilcox? It was not for himself he cared. It was evident last time they met, that he had completely outgrown any remains of his former weakness, but he could not bear that one who had once shown a discriminating preference for better things, should have been so perverted.

But Germain was wrong. Captain Wilcox was essentially a vulgar man; but that which offended Germain at the first glance, appeared to Mr. Dormer and his daughter, the manner of a man who had lived in the world, and his vulgarity once overlooked, he had many redeeming points; he was indeed, as Mr. Dormer always confided to every body soon after introducing him, "a most worthy man, the captain." He had realized a fair fortune by his prudence in the East, without suffering either in liver or character, and was now prepared to spend his money comfortably in his own county.

As a useful assistant in such a scheme, he had made up to Fanny Dormer, whom he met among the seabathers at ———, soon after Germain had left that watering-place. The courtship was concise but effectual. They had been married soon after their return to Rosedale, an event that had escaped Germain's notice during his agreeable sojourn at Boreton Hall. They were likely, till the captain's new house was built, to continue their residence at the rectory; and the afternoon flow of the rector's old port was not a little helped by his own somewhat soporific anecdotes of the trout-fishing in his own stream, being now interspersed with the captain's tales of tiger-hunting on the banks of the Ganges.

Mr. Dormer accompanying Germain to the outer door, took that opportunity of saying: "You have not yet congratulated me upon your old friend Fanny's happiness—a most worthy man, the captain."

"So he seems," said Germain, without exactly reflecting how a man seems "most worthy" in a short morning visit. Any other equally sincere expressions on the subject, were prevented by Fanny herself following them to the door; and there she stood on the same threshold where in former times, she had bounded forward to meet his return, while springy seventeen gave elasticity to her already well-rounded form, and the coming breeze which played among her careless locks disclosed the whole contour of her fine open countenance, and the glad smile of welcome just parted her ruby lips enough to show the dazzling whiteness of her teeth. Now, as Germain took a parting glance in riding from the door, he only thought "What a figure she will have by the time she is mother of half-a-dozen little Wilcoxes!"

CHAPTER XV.

There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score; and I will apparel them all in one livery, that they may agree like brothers, and worship me their lord.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE day of election at length arrived, and all the parties attended at the appointed place, each confidently anticipating a successful result. Of Oakley and Germain the reader already knows rather more than most electors do of their candidates; but Mr. Stedman requires some further notice, and as he was not a man ever to say much for himself, something must be said for him.

He was, perhaps, the most inveterately silent man that ever was sent to assist in a deliberative assembly; true, as the county member, he was called upon between four and five o'clock to take a great deal of walking exercise, in conveying petitions and bills from one part of the House to another, but the moment public business commenced, he became as stationary as the pillars against which he leaned, and thus he sat in sleepy silence, scorning to speak, equally disdainingly to listen. So determined an enemy was he to the principles of free trade, that having brought a certain stock of home-made ideas with him into the house, he bonded them up, equally prohibiting his tongue to circulate those, or his ears to import others. Every progressive improvement he viewed separately, as if arising abruptly out of a state of things that existed forty years ago, and therefore, no doubt, considering it as an uncalled for innovation, met it with a decided, though not expressive negative. He had a sovereign

contempt for his late colleague, Mr. Medium, who, without attending much more acutely to the march of events, wished to be thought to have his own ideas about it, and therefore was constantly and unaccountably trimming backwards and forwards.

Mr. Stedman was of course supported by all that numerous class, who, content with the security of their own selfish comforts, avoid even thinking of the grievances of others, lest an attempt to relieve them (for any thing they know to the contrary) might diminish the value of the peculiar advantages they now enjoy. Oakley on the other hand, was supported by all those with whom innovation and improvement are synonymous. Germain was upheld by many mixed motives, though none perhaps actuating such large bodies as the other two.

And now from every side were crowding into the county-town immense bodies of those to whom was committed the exercise of an Englishman's proudest boast—the elective franchise. Most of them had, according to immemorial custom, been clearing their intellects for a free choice by unlimited potations at the cost of one or other of the candidates.

Here on one side, as far as the eye could reach, stretched a long line of the "true blues," bearing brilliant banners, on which were inscribed, "Stedman and the Constitution!" "Protestant Cause!" "No Popery!" "Church and State!" and many other such "wise saws," which, with other equally valuable appropriations, the high Tories have for some time arrogated to themselves as their property.

On another side were seen equally dense masses, decorated with green ribbons, bearing on their ensigns, "Oakley and liberty!" "Oakley and reform!" and sundry other more enigmatical watch-words, such as "Magna Charta!" "Bill of Rights!" which, as they are brought out well dusted, and displayed in times either of stagnation or scarcity, are supposed by many who bear them, to mean either "high wages," or "cheap bread."

Germain's partisans shone in the brilliancy of their symbolical colouring, but they were terribly in want of an appropriate watch-word, the politics of the party not possessing sufficient force to distil themselves into ardent axioms; "Germain and Independence!" was therefore singularly enough chosen as the most apposite motto.

There was an interval of a few minutes after the parties had met, before they appeared upon the hustings. Germain took advantage of this opportunity, to advance towards Oakley. "Though I never received any answer, Oakley," said he, "to those few lines which I wrote to you, explanatory of my intention of appearing here to day, yet I can easily attribute any such omission to the sufficiently-engrossing occupation in which we have both since been engaged; and therefore hope that our competition is entirely political, not personal."

"How far it may be at all political, I am at a loss to tell," answered Oakley; "since I can hardly ever remember to have heard you express any political opinions. What personal inducements you may have had I as little know as care."

It was actually very true, as Oakley said, that Germain had never appeared to take any deep interest in politics; nor is this strange, in a young man just of age, to whom no career in that line was yet open, and to whom every enjoyment of society was still fresh.

"Perhaps you wish," said Germain, good-humouredly, "that I had taken some other opportunity to make up lost time as a politician; but at any rate, when you talk of personal inducement, I hope you acquit me of having wantonly interposed to thwart you?"

"In a case entirely between ourselves, if I do not choose to accuse, I can hardly be required to acquit. But see, the sheriff expects us."

"Well, you shall not quarrel with me, Oakley, if I can help it, however much you seem to wish it."

"I have not the slightest *wish* on the subject," replied Oakley coldly; and here the conversation ended.

The business of the day was regularly opened. Mr. Stedman was proposed and seconded in a few words by two gentlemen who seemed, like their principal, to apply their horror of any thing new even to their speeches, and therefore only repeated the same sentences, which at the last dissolution had been found to produce the desired effect.

Then, amidst much uproar, Squire Stedman presented himself. He had not, as may be imagined, much to say, and therefore it was perhaps an exercise of political candour on the part of his opponents, to take good care so to interrupt him as to keep him standing, hat in hand, the usual length of a speech. For no one could deny that he looked "the Agricultural Interest" to perfection. As a representative of the soil, he carried an acre or two of it upon his boots and leather breeches; a flock of sheep would hardly have sufficed for the ample folds of his cumbrous coat, and the few straggling hairs which the wind shook out of the mass of powder and pomatum with which his head was amply manured, showed the care and cost at which poor soils should be cultivated.

During the period he thought it necessary to remain standing, whenever a comparative calm occurred, he had recourse to one of the watch-words from his own banners, to appear as if he had been speaking all the while—"Support our invaluable constitution"—loud applause—louder yells—"As in duty bound the Protestant Church"—increased tumult. "Wisdom of our ancestors."—"Go to them and be d——d," cried one voice.—"Ax them about spinning-jennies," cried another.—"They've less land on their hands than you have on yours, Squire," said a third; and amidst enthusiastic applause from his own party, Mr. Stedman retired.

Germain, as the one who had first offered himself upon the present vacancy, was next proposed and

seconded by two gentleman-like young men who possessed good property in the county, appeared in new French gloves, with which they stroked down their well-brushed hats whilst they made two very neat speeches, of which not one syllable could be heard, but which were, strange to say, very accurately reported in the next county paper.

Germain spoke sensibly, and was heard favourably, but not received enthusiastically; for moderation in language, though very distinct in character from mediocrity in intellect, is not unlike it in its deadening effects upon the spirits of a crowd; and he who has one man's head in his face, and two men's elbows in his sides, had rather have his prejudices flattered, and his passions excited, than his reason convinced.

Sir John Boreton had at last, after much doubt and deliberation, been intrusted with the task of proposing Oakley. Lady Boreton had carefully written out for him on the back of a card the heads of what he was to say, and he had rehearsed it to her surprisingly well, considering all things; but upon the hustings an unexpected dilemma occurred. Sir John could not read without spectacles, and in the confusion and anxiety of the moment, after fumbling unsuccessfully in every pocket, (no very oratorical action,) he could not find them; he muttered a few words, ending in "Ernest Oakley, esquire," and cast an imploring look at Lady Boreton, who was posted at a window on the opposite side of the court.

Her ladyship came to his relief, by waving a small green silk flag, a signal which was answered by the cheers of the populace, and the seconder luckily took the opportunity of stepping in before Sir John and taking his place. He was much habituated to this sort of thing, being a master-manufacturer, who dealt in pins and politics, and talking was part of his trade. He dwelt much upon the merits of his "honourable friend, Mr. Oakley."

Now, though Oakley was prepared politically to stretch a fraternal hand of fellowship cordially to all

his constituents, enough has been seen of him for it to be supposed that there was something grating to his not over-easy nature in the idea of the individual familiarity of Mr. Sims, and though, as the occasion required, he smothered this feeling as far as he could, yet it rather interfered with the freedom with which he commenced his address.

But Oakley was gifted with great natural eloquence: that vehemence of manner, too, which in private often hazarded offence, in public carried conviction of his earnest sincerity, and the modulated intonations of his fine voice alone, seemed to challenge concurrence in his opinions. A fine burst of natural eloquence, from its mere sound, ensures spontaneous admiration; like the rush of a mountain-torrent, independent either of the course it takes, or of the depth it covers. Many parts of his speech were certainly peculiarly indiscreet in the situation in which he at present stood, as tending personally to exasperate against him, the supporters of each of the other candidates, and therefore being likely to lead to a union which would be very injurious to his interests.

He was particularly severe upon the vehement conduct of some of the clerical partisans of one of the rival candidates, who, he said, "with Christian charity as their motto, and political power as their pursuit, came there to persecute him for refusing to persecute those whose mere doctrinal differences of religion they made the ground of perpetual exclusion here, which he dared them in the boldest flight of arrogated infallibility to assume, would be the ground of any eternal distinction hereafter."

But as this work is not meant either as a copy or continuation of harangues at public meetings, and as the speeches of the other candidates have not been detailed, neither shall this part of Oakley's, nor the concluding portion, in which he expressed unmingled contempt for the sort of middle line adopted by one of his competitors, who, with neither the curse of ignorance or intemperance, and with sense enough to

perceive the right line, had not virtue enough to follow it.

This was certainly not conciliatory. But at the time its effect was rather imposing; it looked like strength, and a superior disregard of adventitious assistance. Upon the show of hands, the decided majorities were for Oakley and Stedman. A poll was demanded for Germain, and at its close on the first day, the numbers were declared as follows:—

OAKLEY	-	-	-	-	-	634
STEDMAN	-	-	-	-	-	586
GERMAIN	-	-	-	-	-	401

CHAPTER XVI.

1st Officer. How many stand for consulships?

2nd Officer. Three, they say; but 'tis thought of every one Coriolanus will carry it. There have been many great men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved they know not wherefore; so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better ground: therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him, manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition; and out of his noble carelessness, plainly lets them see't.

SHAKESPEARE.

"I HOPE you saw our friend Lady Boreton," said Fitzalbert, who had come in on horseback from Latimer to see the fun; "there she was, fixed to the spot, but waving about like Daphne upon the turn, green even to the tips of her fingers. Well, she is a most formidable antagonist; for if she has not a vote, at least she has a voice. That savage, Oakley—I think he showed very little regard for his former friend in the language he used; and that too after you had been unnecessarily civil to him in your speech. It would serve him quite right, Germain, and be your best chance of success, if you were to join at once with that Knight of the Plough and Pigtail, Stedman."

"To that I have a great objection," answered Germain; "I know Oakley well enough to have a due regard for his intrinsic qualities, and however rough his manner or rugged his temper, I am sure at bottom he has a good heart."

"I never knew a disagreeable man who had not, or was not said to have. I should not call a man well dressed because he had an embroidered birth-day suit

locked up in his wardrobe—your good heart is not every-day wear; it may not come into use above once or twice in a man's life."

"Well, I know you were never fond of Oakley; but as to coalescing with Stedman, though I think Oakley's dislike of contradiction and confidence in his own judgment make him a little wild in some of his political opinions, yet I am much nearer agreeing with him than with Stedman."

"Oh! this is a part of the subject upon which you must excuse me; I look upon the whole affair as little better than a sort of seven years' suicide; but if you choose to buy that most expensive luxury, the privilege of losing your hunting in the winter and your dinners in the spring, and the pleasure of hearing men speak by the hour whose talk you would not endure by the minute—why I was only endeavouring to gratify your taste, such as it is. So adieu! Any message to Lady Latimer?"

Germain returned to his committee-room, certainly not gratified at the events of the morning, but by no means so much dispirited as might have been expected; he had at all times a happy knack of seeing every thing in the most favourable point of view, and at any rate he found a sufficiency of occupation for the moment in listening to the various counsels which alternately preponderated in the little conclave, every one in turn seeming to think that they rendered him the most effectual assistance by differing diametrically from the advice of the last speaker.

His party, it must have been observed, was throughout rather of a mixed character. He had the strenuous support of some of the great families of the county; and as far as personal influence extended, he had made the best possible use of the short period he had been before the public eye, to conciliate and attach people to himself individually, but his best chance of success was to depend upon his being considered as the "least of the two" by one or other of his competitors.

"This will never do," said Mr. Macdeed, shaking his head despondingly; "we can't afford to go on feeding the poll with plumpers. It is very well for that purse-proud Oakley, with high sounding principles for those who are not to be bought, and plenty of money for those who are; it is very well for him to stand aloof, but we have neither funds nor faction enough to prosper alone; and as it is plain we shall never get any assistance from the green party, the alternative seems to me obvious."

Germain's answer to this was interrupted by the entrance of a figure with blue and red ribbons mixed, who thrust a brown sunburnt hand into his, with "How d'ye do to-day, sir?" Germain immediately recognised Captain Wilcox, and the captain continued: "Is your friend Lord Latimer here, sir?"

"Not exactly," replied Germain, rather amused at this eastern idea of freedom of election.

"Oh!" said the captain, "I thought he might have been here, backing you up; you see I've got on the livery too—blue and red mixed—united service colours, as I call them. I hope they'll be seen in common to-morrow, and that you'll contrive between you to keep out that long-winded chap."

"Won't you take a chair, Captain Wilcox?" said Mr. Macdeed, who was delighted at the prospect of such a reinforcement to his view of the subject; but Germain was for the present resolute in postponing any consideration of a coalition till after the close of the next day's poll.

The next day's poll closed, and left Oakley still at the head, and Germain rather lower in proportion than he had been. There is no species of success for the moment so intoxicating as the temporary elevation of a popular candidate at a contested election. It was under the excitement of this influence that Oakley spoke on the second day, and to this is to be attributed much of the intemperance and indiscretion, which gave the more offence from assuming the character of contempt for both of his competitors. He who would

have scorned to yield his judgment to the arguments of any man, allowed his conduct to be influenced by the unmeaning outcries of the senseless rabble that surrounded the hustings.

Not that those vociferous excitements were either so loud or so general as they had been the day before; to explain which it is necessary to own that one of Mr. Macdeed's accusations, that of buying suffrages, was quite unfounded as far as regarded Oakley. He was not a man who ever professed a principle which he did not mean to practise. He did not therefore conceive purity of election to mean the purchase of huzzas from thirsty throats in exchange for hogsheads of ale. His disbursements were confined to what are called strictly legal expenses. The discovery of this fact had its effect upon the degree of enthusiasm with which he was received on the second day. Yet still he was at the head of the poll, and spoke in the full confidence of continuing there till a final happy result of the contest.

In the meantime Fitzalbert had returned, and told Lord Latimer of the difficulty there seemed in so completely detaching Oakley from Germain, as to induce him to throw him overboard and unite with the other; which, as Fitzalbert said, would ensure their success.

Lord Latimer was now so regularly worked up by the excitement of the contest, as to think success an affair of the first moment; he had also originally engaged in the affair principally from a dislike of Oakley; he could not bear, therefore, the prospect of defeat from such a cause as consideration for the person, whose mortification would be rather an additional enjoyment to him: not that he was really an ill-natured person, or that his feelings one way or other would have been very durable, but at the moment he certainly would have thought Oakley's defeat improved the joke. He therefore wrote to Germain earnestly, though good-humouredly, urging him not to throw away the chances in what he justly considered their joint concern.

After this letter was despatched, and till the event was known, the conversation at Latimer, of course, rarely diverged from the all-engrossing topic of the election. And as, during the delusion of such a period, there is hardly an imaginable vice of which people will not accuse a rival candidate, it was not to be expected that Oakley would be spoken of in very favourable terms.

There was one there, however, who heard all the disparaging mention of him in silent dissent. With too much gentleness to dispute, and yet too much character to believe all she heard, the only impression it made upon her mind was, that Lord Latimer, with all his general facility of temper, was prejudiced when thwarted; that Fitzalbert, with all his pleasantry, would say any thing for the sake of a joke; and that even Lady Latimer, in whom it pained her to find any fault, was rather more eager about the event of the election than became one of her sex, unconnected as she was with any of the candidates.

"Can it be," thought Helen, "when I hear Mr. Oakley denounced as having adopted levelling opinions, unbecoming his rank in life, from a constitutional impatience of contradiction, a discontented intolerance of an equal, and purse-proud desire to be the head of his company—can this be the person whose delight it seemed to be to listen with so much interest to the crude, half-formed impressions of an untutored girl; and to explain (oh, how persuasively!) the errors into which utter ignorance of the world might lead me? I can never believe that selfishness is the actuating ingredient in such a character."

Helen had certainly some pretty distinct recollections of ebullitions of impatience even to her upon the subject of the election; but the blame of them she was not willing to attribute exclusively to him, and the only light in which she now recollected them was, as proving the excessive eagerness with which he sought a distinction for which she was sure his talents peculiarly fitted him; and the only regret they now en-

hanced was, that the attainment of that object, so much desired, seemed by no means certain.

Had Helen even been aware of the concurrence of circumstances which first attracted Oakley's attention towards her, she would not readily have admitted what might have occurred to those who took a more unfavourable view of his character, that it was perhaps her very dependence upon him, which the selfish abstraction of his nature considered as an additional charm; but, on the contrary, she would gladly have been convinced of what had indeed latterly been the case, that his conduct towards her had been caused by the working of a passion which has immemorially been allowed to soften rugged natures, and to occasion striking incongruities in a man's general character, and his peculiar deportment when under its influence.

When Germain received Lord Latimer's letter, he had just returned from the hustings after the second day's poll, feeling as much exasperated as it was in his nature to feel at the wanton, unprovoked tone of offence which Oakley had again assumed; yet he had been even more disgusted with a few further specimens of combined ignorance and intolerance from some of the Stedmanites, and in spite of the little personal soreness of the moment, he never could stop to form any comparison between the pleasure he should feel at commencing his public career hand in hand with the friend of his youth, or going into parliament with such a live log tied to him for a colleague as Squire Stedman.

This was not however exactly the alternative he had to decide upon. Lord Latimer's letter put it to him again in a stronger light, that the most probable contingency was that he should himself lose his election. Guy Faux himself, of gunpowder memory, is not more completely a puppet in the hands of the November urchins who set him up, than a candidate at a contested election often is in those of the party which upholds him. This Germain found in the eagerness with which he was now urged to accede to the proposed coalition.

There were not precedents wanting for it, even among those most differing from Mr. Stedman in principles. In contests like the present, individual security, not political consistency, is made the first object. Mr. Macdeed, who had been very active all the morning in attempting to arrange this junction, found Mr. Stedman's party even more anxious for it; for they had at length discovered that that fine old scarlet bugbear, the Pope, had been rather worn out in the course of the last seven years, and as they had nothing to replace him, they were desirous to take any measures to patch up their thread-bare pretensions. The event may be anticipated—an exchange of second votes, as far as they had it in their power to arrange it, was determined upon, and the effect was soon apparent.

For though it gave Oakley an additional opening for some fine bursts of indignant declamation, yet at the same time it so far increased the irritability of his temper, as to make him unintentionally offend some of his most zealous partisans.

Combined too with the limitations which upon principle he had put to the expenses, it caused a visible diminution in his relative strength. After therefore, an animated but fruitless contest, in which it would be difficult to say whether he had most succeeded in extorting admiration, or provoking hostility, the numbers were declared at the final close of the poll,

GERMAIN	-	-	-	-	-	2301
STEDMAN	-	-	-	-	-	2254
OAKLEY	-	-	-	-	-	1906

CHAPTER XVII.

————— The fearful time
Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love,
And ample interchange of sweet discourse,
Which so long sunder'd friends should dwell upon.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILST the contest still continued, Oakley had not felt any despondency at his daily diminishing hopes of success. The reputation of a martyr was one peculiarly suited to his character. It was almost the only distinction which, whilst it elevated him in his own opinion, at the same time fed that distrust of others in which it pleased him to indulge. Whilst he persuaded himself, in attempting to persuade others, that he was the victim of an unprincipled conspiracy, it is to be doubted whether at the moment he would have exchanged the liberty of expressing his opinion of his opponents in unmeasured terms, for that situation on the poll which would have burdened his tongue with a weight of gratitude, and deprived him of the pleasure of considering himself as a virtuous victim to the ignorance and corruption of the age.

But, as the excitement subsided, other feelings blended themselves with the retrospect. He left the town in Lady Boreton's carriage: her ladyship had been active in her assistance to the very last, and would now, if she had received any encouragement, have been equally ready with her consolations, but Oakley's taciturnity seemed invincible; therefore Lady Boreton, whose busy mind was never unoccupied, entered at once into eager conversation with her literary hanger-on, who sat opposite, and was soon as far off as the gardens of the Hesperides, discussing their recently discovered locality. Sir John, who was opposite Oakley, lest he should be expected to say any thing, kept his eyes as intently fixed upon the passing

hedges, as if he had been counting the blackberries on them.

Oakley therefore was allowed, undisturbed, the indulgence of his reflections at much greater length than they need be recorded. It is sufficient to say, that every ground of consolation gradually faded away upon further examination. He now felt disposed to doubt the justice, or even the excellence of some of those philippics of which he had not been a little proud, when they found a ready approval in the acclamations of his party. Their effect however still remained to be felt; they had alienated the only person whose friendship he had ever valued, and separated him farther from her who had awakened in his heart an interest, strong in proportion to the newness of the feeling to him.

He was roused by hearing Lady Boreton say, after a check to their progress, caused by meeting another carriage at a turnpike, "There is Lady Latimer, of course all smiles; and can that possibly be Miss Mordaunt moping in the corner? How that girl is altered since she first came to my house! I can't think what has come over her; I never saw any thing so melancholy as she looked last time she came into town with Lady Latimer."

The carriages crossed; no one replied to Lady Boreton's remark; she therefore returned to her golden-fruited gardens, Sir John to his blackberry-bushes, and Oakley resumed his reverie, which was now somewhat less political than it had originally been. They thus arrived at the first stage where they were to separate; Sir John and Lady Boreton continuing their route homewards, and Oakley mounting his horse and crossing to Goldsborough. The groom who had come to meet him with the horse, brought with him from thence a packet which otherwise affected his destination.

It was with some surprise that he read a letter from Mrs. Mordaunt to him, in which she stated that she was already under such heavy obligations to him, that she had the less hesitation in applying to him now to extricate her from difficulties of a delicate and distressing nature. Her health had latterly, she said,

been breaking rapidly; she had been anxious not to alarm Helen on the subject unnecessarily, till warned by her physician that she had no time to lose. As her daughter's intimacy with Lady Latimer had originated in an accidental occurrence, with which she had herself no concern, she was unwilling now to open a communication with that lady, which might lead to inquiries, that, for many reasons, she would rather avoid; and yet she could not bear that her daughter should return to her unprepared to find her much changed since last they parted. She therefore knew not to whom to confide the task of imparting to Helen the painful necessity for her return, unless it was to him from whom she had no secret, and to whom she owed the double debt of having, by his liberality, given comfort to her latter days, and by his kindness, smoothed her daughter's first entrance into the world.

Oakley's faculties had been so bewildered and exhausted by the excitement under which he had been lately labouring, that he read this letter over several times before he could form any consistent plan for complying with the request it contained. It appeared as if Mrs. Mordaunt had been ignorant of many late circumstances, which made him a peculiarly inconvenient medium for communicating any thing to Helen whilst under Lord Latimer's roof. And such indeed was the case. Helen could have related nothing to her mother on the subject of the election, except those prejudiced versions of the contest which were perpetually repeated in her hearing at Latimers, and which she was extremely unwilling to believe; she had therefore adopted the alternative of utter silence on that subject, and so completely secluded was Mrs. Mordaunt's mode of life, that she was very unlikely to know any thing about it from any other source.

She therefore had written in the full confidence that Mr. Oakley's intercourse with her daughter was still upon the same easy footing that it had formerly been. Her own early experience of the workings of the heart, and the deductions which, in the calm of

her latter days, she had drawn from that experience, leading her to believe that Helen's comparative omission of Oakley's name in her most recent letters, arose from other causes than either separation or indifference. Not that it ought, therefore, to be supposed that Mrs. Mordaunt had formed any interested scheme for her daughter's advantageous settlement in life, by a union with Oakley, but occasionally, in her solitude, indistinct hopes of that nature would come across her. She had so studied Helen's character, she had so sifted its freedom from the seeds of those errors which had been her own ruin, that when year after year she found it only more "lovely in blossom, rich in fruit," she justly considered that one so perfect as a daughter, would be invaluable as a wife.

True, with bitter humiliation she felt that her own character might be a bar to any connexion of that kind; and to think of her, separated and estranged, was more than she could bear: but it had long been in her daughter and for her daughter alone she had lived, and for her sake she hoped soon to die.

It was in the prospects which the visit to Lady Latimer seemed to have opened to Helen, that Mrs. Mordaunt found her consolation for the present separation. Lady Latimer had first met Miss Mordaunt at the house of an old governess of hers, who had retired to the same secluded neighbourhood as her mother. She was a very respectable elderly gentlewoman, with whom Lady Latimer kept up an occasional intercourse, in gratitude for some early moral instruction which Lady Flamborough had, as in duty bound, in the first instance, hired her to implant, and afterwards had herself been at some pains to eradicate. This good old lady had taken a great fancy to Miss Mordaunt, and had introduced her to the notice of Lady Latimer, as the orphan-child of an officer in the army, whose widow lived in that neighbourhood.

But to return to Oakley and the letter. It is to be feared that one of the first reflections that it raised in his mind was, that the death of a person in Mrs. Mordaunt's situation would be no disadvantage to Helen;

but he checked the idea, when he recollected the shock her affectionate nature would sustain in the final separation from a mother, from whom she had received nothing but kindness, and of whom she knew nothing but good. Again he cursed this unlucky election, which had laid an embargo upon personal communication at present. How could he, especially after the language he had used about Lord Latimer and his friends, attempt to cross his threshold uninvited and unexpected?

He sat down determined to write the painful intelligence he had to convey to Miss Mordaunt. But he could not satisfy himself with either the style or substance of what he had committed to paper. Besides, what right had he to address Miss Mordaunt at all? Many things, which an additional word or look might explain or soften, at the moment looked abrupt when staring nakedly and unalterably upon paper.

At one time he thought of returning home to Goldsborough and committing to some delegated person the task that had been assigned to himself. But *who* should be that person? became the next question. Mr. Gardner from his character, would have been peculiarly fitted to undertake it, but he could not think of asking such a favour of him, after parting from him in a temper of suspicion, which did not render it easy to make the next meeting one of unrestrained confidence.

He read the letter again, and it appeared that something must be decided on speedily. Whilst he was still deliberating, the shades of night thickened around him, and after having made a last ineffectual attempt to finish what he had written by the uncertain fire-light in the little room to which he had retired, he took the sudden resolution of returning himself alone, and under cover of the darkness, (he trusted unobserved,) to the county town where Helen had accompanied Lady Latimer.

"There at least," thought he, "whilst they are occupied with their petty triumph, I can have an op-

portunity of a few minutes' private conversation with Miss Mordaunt without trespassing upon Lord Latimer's hospitality."

This resolution was no sooner taken than executed, and he was without farther delay on horseback, and again, but more rapidly gliding past those hedges of which Sir John had some hours before so accurately examined the details, but which now appeared, by the uncertain twilight of an autumnal evening, to stalk by in gloomy, gigantic masses, as he galloped between them. He heeded not their threatening shadows, nor the more substantial discomforts of the coming storm, entirely occupied with arranging, as far as the confusion of his ideas would admit, the manner in which he might best break the unwelcome tidings with which he was charged, to one whom he was most unwilling to pain.

The first thing that at all dissipated the deep abstraction in which these thoughts involved him, was soon after entering the town, a sudden and violent start of his horse at a blazing pile which flared across the streets. This appeared to rise out of a cask, which the drunken assemblage who surrounded it, having previously emptied it, had now filled with combustibles, and on the top of it was exposed a stuffed figure, which, from its black wig and oratorical attitude, was evidently meant for Oakley himself.

Enraged at the sight, he spurred his horse furiously through the mob, who fled on all sides, scared at the sight, as the lurid glare fell for a moment upon the haggard apparition of him whose image they had just been reviling, but whose actual presence they had seen removed from the town some hours before. In another second he was lost in the thick cloud of smoke which rolled onward the way he went, and it ever after remained an unexplained mystery, what it was the boys saw that night near Tom Smith's rag-yard. Even the old gossip (who, as the first authority in ghost-stories was consulted on the subject) only shook his head, and said, "It was na a canny task to burn a sinfu' cratur afore his day—there was no tilling wha

might com in sim shape or other to thankee for saving of his fuel."

Meantime Oakley rode on, not much improved in temper by the late incident, and having put up his horse, sought out Lady Latimer's lodging.

CHAPTER XVIII.

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

SHAKESPEARE.

"AND you never were at a ball before, my dear Helen?" said Lady Latimer, as they drove into town that day. "How you will enjoy it, and what a sensation you will create! Why, it will make that old, rural, dirty Mr. Stedman, dance like Pan himself to have you for a partner."

"I hope you won't be angry at what I am going to say. But I wish you would excuse my going to this ball to-night. I am delighted to come here, or go any where that procures me the pleasure of being with you, but I can be no resource to you in a ball-room; and though your kindness endeavours to make me forget my own insignificance, yet at a meeting of this sort, utterly unknown as I am, I cannot help thinking I must be *de trop*—at festivities too, to which I cannot be considered a party."

"If a party, not a very friendly one, I am afraid," said Lady Latimer, smiling. "Have a care, or I will tell Germain that I fear we have a traitor in the camp, whose wishes were with the fallen. Nay, now you belie my words, for your cheeks are of Germain's colour, sure enough. But no more excuses for to-night at least; I will fulfil Macbeth's threat and make 'the green one red.'"

"Nay, you wrong me if you think I can do otherwise than rejoice in your success; and I hope that you won't attribute my conduct to any such ingratitude, when I own that so thoroughly was I convinced that I

should be in your way to-night, that I have brought no ball-dress with me."

"Nor have I," said Lady Latimer, "so you will be as well off as I am—but wait a little," added she, observing that Helen looked surprised at this declaration.

"Any cases come for me from London?" asked Lady Latimer, upon alighting at her lodging.

"Yes, two," my lady, readily replied the soubrette.

"Now for them, then. There, my dear Helen, did you ever see any thing so beautiful? the colour quite appropriate, all trimmed with the *véritable feu d'enfer*; not those awkward imitations of which one has been ashamed during the election—both precisely alike you see—this was my little surprise for you; you had no suspicion when I observed how well my dresses fitted you, that I meant to send for this as a little cadeau for you, that we might both appear exactly the same to-night."

There was so much genuine good-nature mixed up with the frivolous importance which Lady Latimer attached to this little affair, that Helen could not bear to disappoint her by refusing to use, on this appropriate occasion, the beautiful dress which she had taken such pains to procure for her.

Lady Latimer having quite made up her mind that there was but one person who could dress both their heads in a manner at all worthy of the occasion, Miss Mordaunt had retired first, and had returned to the drawing-room, her toilette finished, the beautiful dress even exceeding Lady Latimer's expectations, and her fine hair interspersed with corresponding bows of *feu d'enfer*. She was expecting to have long to await alone the result of her friend's somewhat *soigné* labour, when a bustle was heard in the passage below.

Lady Latimer's servants never did more than was absolutely necessary at home, and upon an occasion like the present, they would have thought it quite out of character to be in the way; therefore it was the soubrette of the house who announced that "a gentleman wished to speak to Miss," and without waiting a reply, ushered Oakley into the room.

It would be hardly possible to imagine a more attractive object than Helen Mordaunt then appeared—a form and features in which were happily blended the brilliant with the delicate; a countenance marked at once with strength of mind and innocence of heart; and all those innate charms enhanced by the efforts of art, which in this instance had luckily united the correct in fashion with the becoming in taste.

But if, instead, a loathsome and disgusting object had unexpectedly crossed his path, Oakley's countenance, upon beholding it, could not have undergone a more sudden change in expression than when he found her, whom he had come to console in affliction, more radiant than ever, decked out, as he thought, insultingly, in his rival's colours. Helen's surprise at first keeping her silent, he began with suppressed emotion: "The person I see, is so unlike the Miss Mordaunt I expected to find, that I know not how I can sufficiently apologize for my intrusion."

"I will not deny that I am indeed much astonished to see you here, and thus—" said she, looking at his splashed and disordered appearance; "but from all I have known of Mr. Oakley, I have no doubt that he has some good reason to give for what indeed——"

"All you have known of Mr. Oakley—perhaps you know as little in truth of what Mr. Oakley really is, as he now finds to his cost he knew of Miss Mordaunt. We may have been equally deceived."

"This is very strange," said Helen, alarmed. "I entreat you to recollect yourself, Mr. Oakley. Lady Latimer will be down presently, and if you have any thing to say, I beg it may be in her presence."

"Yes, Lady Latimer—she it is that has wrought this change in you—a cold, unfeeling coquette, who simply to gratify her vanity would compromise her own character. Why should she respect that of her friend?—she it is that, at a time when you ought to be far otherwise attired, has for her own purposes decked you out in these trappings of her fickle admirer, the frivolous Germain."

"Whatever Mr. Germain's character may be, it is

not for me to defend it; but I must say, that I feel confident his conduct would never have been such as in the last few minutes I have blushed to witness. Oh, for shame, Mr. Oakley!" added she, gathering courage as she proceeded, "if no generous regard for my unprotected situation prevents your forcing upon my unwilling ear erroneous constructions upon my conduct, why should you imagine that I can hear without resentment an unprovoked libel upon the character of my best friend and benefactress, and that too from one who has no claim upon me beyond that of a common acquaintance, and whom gratitude to my protectress, will be sufficient to make me henceforth treat as a stranger."

Helen's feelings had been thoroughly roused by an overpowering sense of injustice; and whilst her eye flashed indignantly upon Oakley with an expression so different from its habitual mildness, the recollection of his uncle's portrait came involuntarily across him. He felt for a moment subdued by the tone she took; but there was much of what she said peculiarly galling to his impetuous disposition in its present fevered state. The unfavourable comparison drawn between himself and Germain, excited a feeling, which combined with the previous ranklings of envy, the additional pang of jealousy. The rejection of him as a stranger, with which she concluded, conspired to overthrow the little command he still had upon himself, and he replied:—

"What other claims upon your favour I may have foolishly imagined I had established, it is useless now to inquire, but you may live to feel that the gratitude you profess towards Lady Latimer is as nothing compared to that which you ought to have acknowledged towards me."

"Gratitude to you!—for what? Can you possibly mean to allude to attentions, which it would be as unworthy in you to urge, as degrading to me to admit, as establishing such a claim?—Gratitude to you I owe you none."

"What!" said Oakley wildly, "none that I readily

cancelled my uncle's tacit rejection of his child—none that I gave to the offspring of shame an honourable position in the world by continuing to your surviving parent the pension of her guilt?"

"Good God, he's mad!" exclaimed Helen, a sudden conviction of that appalling nature coming upon her, from the vehemence of his manner, and the apparent incoherence of what he uttered. She darted by him to the door, and succeeded in making her escape up stairs. Her first idea was to seek protection in Lady Latimer's apartment, but she hesitated even at the door, from an unwillingness herself to explain and detail, particularly at the present moment, all that had just passed; she therefore retired to her own room, where she remained some minutes in a deplorable state of agitation. She then heard Oakley, who had made no attempt to follow her, rapidly descending the stairs, and immediately after, the house-maid brought her a letter in her mother's hand directed to Oakley, enclosed in an envelope, in which was scrawled in pencil these few lines:—

"I can in no way make reparation for what I have done, nor expect you to forgive me, when I can never forgive myself. The enclosed will explain that I came with other intentions than wantonly to insult you, though it will not, and cannot excuse the brutal perversion of my errand. May heaven support you under those afflictions, which it is my curse to have aggravated!"

E. O.

The comparative sanity of this note, and the tone of obligation with which she found her mother addressing him, were far from consolatory to Helen; for they opened to her the dreadful suspicion that there was some foundation for the mysterious connexion with Oakley at which he had hinted. This harrowing thought did not however at the moment take much hold upon her mind, as every other idea was superseded for the time by the present calamity which her mother's letter imparted, that she was ill, very ill, and desired her immediate return.

It was with the determination just formed, that her

departure should not be delayed another moment, that she was found by Lady Latimer, whose toilet was at length finished, and who entered her room engrossed with the expectation of that admiration she knew she so well deserved. Helen immediately communicated to her the intelligence she had received of her mother's illness, though she did not add the means by which she had learnt it.

Lady Latimer was much disappointed, and at first attempted to remove the impression of its serious nature, by saying—

“Oh! I dare say it is of no consequence; your fears have exaggerated things; to-morrow we shall be returning, and then, certainly, if you like, you can go home.”

But, upon raising her candle to Helen's face, the desolating effects of agitation she there observed, which had been in no small degree caused by the scene she had undergone, but which Lady Latimer attributed entirely to the news she had received, showed that she was not to be trifled with. She therefore at once offered one of her own carriages and servants to be immediately ordered to convey Miss Mordaunt upon her way homewards, if she wished to set off without delay. This having been thankfully accepted, Lady Latimer left the room, saying that she would herself stay at home till every thing was ready, in order that she might see that all possible expedition was used.

Helen immediately commenced, with no small degree of impatience, throwing off the unlucky ball-dress which had certainly excited any thing but admiration in the only person by whom it had been seen; and soon were scattered about the room, flowers, ribbons, and similar paraphernalia, which would have made the fortune of any milliner, and the happiness of any young lady in the county. Under Lady Latimer's own immediate direction, the preparations for the journey were completed in an incredibly short time, and after a most affectionate farewell, the two friends separated, Helen to commence her sad and solitary return homewards, Lady Latimer to gladden the expectant eyes of the brilliant ball-room.

YES AND NO:

A TALE OF THE DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MATILDA."

Che sì e no nel capo mi tenziona.

DANTE.

At war 'twixt *will* and *will* not.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

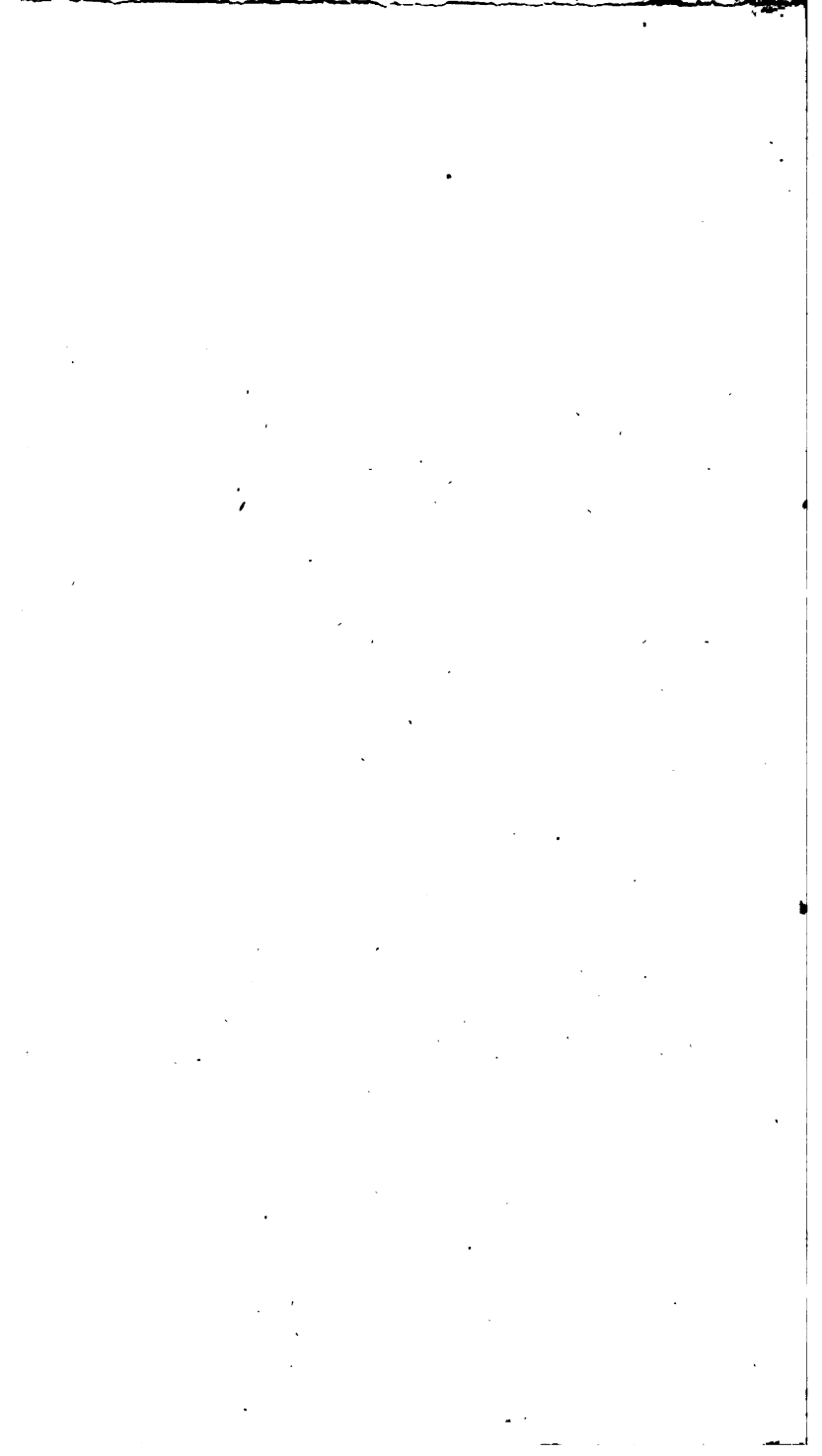
VOL. II.

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1828.



YES AND NO.

CHAPTER I.

Gentlemen, welcome! ladies, that have their toes
Unplagu'd with corns, will have a bout with you:
Aha, my mistresses! which of you all
Will now deny to dance? she that makes dainty, she,
I'll swear hath corns; am I come near you now?
You are welcome, gentlemen!—Come, musicians,
A hall! a hall! give room, and foot it girls!

SHAKESPEARE.

THE events of the last chapter, combined with Lady Latimer's rather deliberate devoirs at her dressing-table, had so much postponed her arrival, that by the time she entered the room, the ball was at its zenith. For two hours previously had the motley assemblage been collecting; and various as the character and rank of the company, had been their modes of arrival.

First, the ostentatious old grandee, who had insisted on the dignity of his coach-and-six, though at every turn of the narrow streets the leaders' heads had smashed a shop window, and the hind wheel had carried off the scraper from the opposite door.

Then, drawn by a pair of the farm-team, slowly rolled on the family chariot, whose single seat was as warmly contested as if it had been a parliamentary one: the proper pretensions of a bodkin being very differently considered by brother Bill, whose tight "knees" resisted sitting in too acute an angle; and

by sisters Selina and Georgina, who insisted on ample space for their lower garments, and elbow-room for their gigot sleeves.

Here too, but, for the convenient darkness, might have been seen, from under a carefully-gathered gown, a well turned leg, and slim ankle, tottering over the crossing, beneath the weight of cambrus clogs; papa having been too stingy to hire a chaise to go a hundred yards, and Miss herself too impatient to wait for the twentieth turn of the single sedan which the town boasted.

How little know they, whose London mornings are spent in a fastidious discussion of the half-a-dozen "at homes," from which they are to make a selection, of the pleasure felt by the country girl in the anticipation of her only ball! With all the langour of the last night's raking still upon her, the disciple of fashion finds out, as she contemptuously tosses over the offered engagements for the evening, that Lady G. has not got Collinet; that Mrs. H. lives in Bryanstone Square, and she makes it a rule never to cross Oxford Street except to the *corps diplomatique*, who, as foreigners, have a right to live in outlandish parts; that Lady Mary is always so civil, and means this for a squeeze; and that if they go to Mrs. D's. they must ask her in return; and their "very small, very early,"——impossible!

On the other hand, the rural nymph, to whom an engagement of this kind is an extraordinary event, wakes earlier in the morning, for fear she should not be in time, counts the hours impatiently till dressing, whilst the habitual glow of health is heightened by the flush of excitement. And what can be a more gratifying sight than such a collection of happy faces if they did but know how to dance!

Germain had miraculously escaped from his election-dinner, only so much elevated with all he had swallowed, as made him the more likely to go through the remaining labours of the evening with spirit, and therefore with success.

Not so Mr. Macdeed and Captain Wilcox, who were both as much cut as the occasion warranted, and walked about the early part of the evening arm-in-arm, each thinking that he was taking care of the other. The wine rendered Macdeed facetious, the captain only familiar.

"My friend the captain," Macdeed repeated several times with an accompanying laugh; "though only a single vote after our dinner has turned out a plumper."

"Macdeed, my man, don't talk nonsense; and take care, or you'll run against the ladies," replied the captain, pulling him away.

Mr. Stedman was solemn and sober, but looked wonderfully clean, till after the dancing had set in with such severity as to cause the first fall of powder upon his coat, which, though antique in cut, was new for the occasion; nor was his double-breasted white dimity waistcoat as yet stained with snuff; and his stout legs, shown to advantage in ribbed silk stockings, seemed to want nothing but elasticity to qualify them for the labours of the evening. Yet for all this, there was not a young lady whose situation in the county entitled her to dance with one of the members, who did not put up a secret wish that the young and handsome Germain might first offer to lead her forth, and that she might not be left to be dragged up and down by the main force of the old squire.

Germain, who was not very learned in the etiquette of these occasions, had entertained some vague sort of intention of opening the ball with Lady Latimer, but her late arrival put that out of the question, and it was lucky for his popularity that it did so. It was suggested to him, that to dance with a bride would prevent jealousies about any other pretensions; and Mrs. Captain Wilcox, both on account of her father's situation in the county, and her husband's recently acquired property, would be a proper person.

Our old friend Fanny was not dressed as a bride—it would have been better if she had, for the combined

election colours which she thought her husband's opinions required on the occasion, were not becoming. Hers was not a taste which could be trusted with the indiscriminate use of two such colours as blue and red, particularly as she of course had no very accurate idea of the peculiarly delicate shade of the real "*feu d'enfer*." Her shoes, however, were red, which Germain could not deny was giving a very fair allowance in point of quantity to his colour. Still her general appearance was dowdy; and as Germain stood opposite to her waiting to begin, though it was impossible to find much fault with any thing that looked so good and fresh, and happy and healthy, yet he could not help wondering at his former self, as he recollected some of the day dreams of his early sentiment.

There, too, stood his formerly revered, always respectable Mentor, her father, who certainly was not in the same state as the captain and Mr. Macdeed; but this arose not so much from any abstemiousness on the occasion, as from having ascertained from long habit exactly how much he could drink with decency. Germain fancied, when he first observed him, that his features had the cunning compression of a man who knows that he has drunk enough, and he was confirmed in his opinion by the maudlin tone in which he said, as he passed, nodding at Fanny, "Old times, eh, Mr. Germain?"

When Captain Wilcox at that moment touched him on the other side, and nodding and smirking, said, "Much flattered, I'm sure, Mr. Germain; you'll make Mrs. Wilcox quite sport high at opening the ball with the Member, ——" Germain felt almost gratified by the captain's interruption, from the consciousness he thence derived, that 'old times' could not be really revived,

Reply was prevented by the commencement of the dancing; and Fanny swam, and bounced, and floated, and jumped, as if she was determined to show her sense of the honour.

"'Tis pity," thought Germain, "that where the heart is so light, the heels should be so heavy."

At length, to his infinite relief, though his exertions had kept no pace, with those of his partner, they reached the bottom. At this moment Lady Latimer entered the room alone, and took her seat at one end of it by Mrs. and the Misses Luton. She had depended upon having Miss Mordaunt to accompany her. Lord Latimer had declined to come from a feeling, perhaps unnecessarily squeamish in those days, that a peer had better not personally interfere in elections. Fitzalbert, in a fit of indolence, had staid with him.

The first glance satisfied Germain that Lady Latimer never looked more beautiful; and she took the same opportunity to signify her congratulation at his success by a slight inclination of the head, and a finger half raised to point out the colours she wore. But from where he stood, Germain could see her but imperfectly; for between them was the figure of Mrs. Wilcox fanning herself, and swinging about her not very transparent person. The captain, too, came up to them again, saying, "Fanny, my dear, had'nt you better be seated; now I declare you are quite warm, and I'm sure you must be leg-weary."

"Me! oh no, I could dance down ten times more with pleasure."

"*Dieu m'en défende!*" thought Germain.

"But are you sure it's quite prudent, my dear?" inquired the captain, winking and nudging Germain who was not learned enough in family matters to to comprehend the meaning of the inuendo, though it added to the already deep die of Fanny's skin.

As they were (to use the new idiom of the day) being danced up, he observed Lady Latimer, who was really short-sighted, and never used a glass offensively, stealing hers up to her eye, and directing it towards the expansive but unconscious front of his partner which was turned towards her. This was evidently followed by an inquiry of Mrs. Luton, and he

did not at all like the tale-telling manner in which that lady prepared to answer it; for he had a disagreeable recollection that she had lived near his tutor's, and that she could no otherwise account for the indifference he then showed to the advances of any, and indeed all of the Misses Luton; than by supposing a domestic prepossession at Mrs. Dormer's. He felt sure, too, that she would detail every thing in the most malicious manner; and he could not deny, as he looked at Mrs. Captain Wilcox, that it wanted no assistance to make her, and consequently himself, ridiculous.

The apparently interminable dance at length concluded, he hastened to Lady Latimer, and began expressing his regrets, which were certainly very sincere, that she had not arrived in time for him to open the ball with her. "Oh," said she, laughing, "pray don't think it necessary to make speeches which we know how far to believe. You remember the old proverb, '*On revient toujours*;' need I go on, or does your conscience fill up the rest?"

Germain felt that he looked sufficiently foolish for him to wish to avoid Lady Latimer's eye, he therefore carried his down the line beyond, where it encountered Mrs. Luton's malicious grin, Miss Luton's suppressed smile, Miss Anne Luton's silly simper, and a certain expression which twittered about the little pursed-up mouths of the whole line of Misses Luton.

Now Germain was not aware that he had given what was considered very serious ground of offence to every one of these young ladies. The elder ones recollected the manner in which he had formerly slighted their charms, and all of them considered, that as they were the only young ladies in the room who had actually been at Paris, and who bore about them the outward and visible signs of it, that this ought to have superseded every other claim to precedence, and left, as the only choice for Germain, which of the sisters he should open the ball with.

Germain felt what has been felt by less diffident characters when exposed alone to a whole line of ladies, that if he was not actually making a favourable impression upon one, he was probably making an unfavourable one upon all, and therefore to extricate himself from this false position, he proposed to Lady Latimer to dance the next dance with him.

"I think I am growing too old," said she, evidently not very seriously; "I am losing the elasticity of youth," looking down at her pretty little foot, which certainly seemed to come much more under the description of the "light fantastic" than that of his last partner.

What gallant reply he might have thought it necessary to make is unknown, for at that moment he felt his elbow touched and turning round he beheld the persevering Captain Wilcox.

"Sweet woman that, the Viscountess Latimer; would you do me the honour to present me to her in due form?" Germain did not know how to refuse, and therefore mentioned the request to Lady Latimer. "What," said she "the successful rival? you generous man!" The introduction effected, the captain began—

"My lord's not here, I understand. I hope not indisposed. I am sure you look charming well, my lady, in spite of the hot room—perhaps, as assistant-surgeon Jackson used to say at Madras, the hotter the healthier, because——"

"And so you insist upon my standing up this dance," said Lady Latimer to Germain, taking his arm, and interrupting the captain, and then continuing, as she walked away—"That was a little too bad, Mr. Germain. So I was to have occupied the good, easy man, whilst you—Oh! for shame!"

There was much in all this that annoyed Germain; he was, as has been seen before, always peculiarly sensitive to ridicule, and the tone of banter so successfully assumed by Lady Latimer, he could not conceal

from himself was most probably founded on indifference. However, though she was soon satisfied with the sensation her presence had created in the ball-room, and retired early, he resolutely remained much of the night, as in duty bound; and it was a very late hour ere the festivities concluded.

CHAPTER II.

Oh, Grief hath changed me since you saw me last;
And careful hours, with Time's deformed hand,
Have written strange defeatures in my face.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE night was dark and stormy, a circumstance of which most of the revellers amid the dust and noise and glare of the ball-room were, or affected to be, unconscious. True, the proprietor of the coach-and-six had it hinted to him, and departed accordingly; but the fair owner of the clogs danced indefatigably till dawn, without wasting a thought upon the increasing difficulties of her return, and then ran laughing and hopping home, having deposited one of her clumsy protectors stuck deep in the first miry crossing.

But there was one to whom the tempestuous state of the weather during that tedious night added to the dreariness of her situation. Helen found her progress seriously retarded by the severity of the storm. For though Lady Latimer's servant, spurred to exertion by his mistress's express injunctions, did all in his power to facilitate their advance, yet as the road they had to travel was a cross country one, it required at each of the inns where they changed horses, no small powers of persuasion to convince the sleepy postboys, harassed and jaded as they and their horses had latterly been by the election, that any one could really wish them on such a night as this to leave their warm beds, and drive ten or fifteen miles.

At each of these unwelcome checks to her impatience, Helen sat motionless, absorbed in her own me-

lancholy thoughts, intently gazing upon the front window, against which the beating rain never ceased to patter, her eye following mechanically the copious streams in which it descended the glass, and equally unconscious of the tears which more silently trickled down her own cheeks.

Her mother had been all in all to her: she had never seemed to have any separate existence from that of her child. As the incidents of her early life now passed rapidly through her mind, with an accuracy and yet a variety which nothing but the concentrated feelings of such a moment could condense into so short a space, she could not recollect any one act of her parent's which was not dictated by the most anxious, and yet the most judicious regard for her welfare. And she had enjoyed a mother's affection in all its purity and all its strength, undiluted by division—unalloyed by the slightest dross of self, and yet she had been absent from her during a serious, perhaps a tedious illness, and had thus missed the only occasion, when she might have attempted to repay, though imperfectly, those fond attentions which she had always experienced from her in all the ills of childhood. She might well have thought that the prospect of such a final separation, under such circumstances, would have been incapable of aggravation; but in anguish she now admitted that a most cruel aggravation had been but too successfully attempted, and by whom—she could hardly bear to think.

Oakley's last words still rung in her ears. She rejected them as the ravings of passion, till her mother's apparent confirmation forced itself on her recollection. "You from whom I have had no secret." And was it from him, in whom confidence seemed to have been so unworthily placed, that she must receive the only cureless wound? Mortal separation, even heart-rending as that with which she was threatened, as the common lot of humanity, is not entirely incapable of alleviation—pious resignation may sooth its pangs, till all-healing time has slowly worked out his

cure. But how would nature and reason have made their first efforts to assuage the hitherto uncontrollable bursts of grief? By fondly pointing to the spotless memory of her that was gone; and this blessed consolation had been wantonly and abruptly destroyed by him, from whom, least of all, she would have expected such wrong. As the morning advanced, and she approached her destination, these thoughts for the time faded before the more immediate fear that she might have arrived too late.

Mrs. Mordaunt's dwelling was rather prettily situated on the skirts of a little village. It was of the cottage order; and the garden and little ground about it had all those marks of care and attention which are found when the owner's first resource is in the works of nature.

It was hence that Helen had derived her earliest recollections. It had been purchased for Mrs. Mordaunt, and had been legally settled on her, though the annuity had not, and was therefore all she possessed independent of Oakley. Helen's tottering steps, as she descended from the carriage, were supported by old Dorothy, who without administering much further comfort, relieved her anxious doubts as to her mother's being still alive.

Old Dorothy had been with her mistress as long as Helen could remember, and all her infantine grievances, such as they were, had been confined to the very short and constantly diminishing intervals when her mother's authority had been transferred to her as her deputy; for nature had not endowed Dorothy with a good temper, and perhaps her limited experience of life had not improved it. The wayward fancies of childhood had therefore often irritated and incensed her. In later days, what had most soured her and excited her spleen, was Helen's increasing beauty.—Whether this arose from her own original deficiency in this respect, or from some other cause, she used always to say: "She know'd naught but mischief comes of your fair skin and your fine form.

"The canker feeds on the fairest rose,
And the brightest eye will soonest close."

But she showed withal a most invincible, dogged fidelity to her mistress, over whom Helen had early observed that she had no slight degree of influence. She had also always remarked that Dorothy was kinder at a period of calamity or distress, and that not so much from any apparent effort to exert herself more at such times, as that it was a state which appeared best suited to her own habitual frame of mind. It was long therefore since Helen had been so warmly greeted by her as she was upon the present melancholy occasion of her return. As she supported her with one arm, she gently turned the stray hair off her forehead with her other withered hand. Perhaps she was softened and thrown off her guard by her own distress—perhaps the havoc that grief had made in Helen's beauty caused her to view it with unusual complacency, as she said: "God bless your dear face, it does one good to see it again—how you have been crying! Oh! Miss Mordaunt, to think that you should return when there is no hope left. She has been much worn away within the last week; before that I never found it out: she never complains, you know it's not her way. I thought to myself that she seemed to grow a bit thinner; but I've seen over many and great changes in her, poor lady, in my day, to mind a trifle; and then my eyes are not so sharp as they have been; and I minded it not so much, for that I guessed your being away might make her a bit lonesome, for she needs other company than her own thoughts and I spoke to her more sharply than I've done this many a long year, that she should send for you here, and that she ought to ken well enough you'd get no good gadding where you were; and then she took on so, poor soul, that I was sorry for what I'd said, though I meant it all for the best. And the next day was the first she was over weak to get as far as your garden to tend your flowers. She'd ne'er missed a day

since you went, and that she minded worser than any thing, and so she sent for the doctor, and together they settled to have you back."

By this time they had crossed the garden to the front door, and Helen eagerly inquired whether she should go in at once to her mother, or whether Dorothy had best break her arrival to her.

"Why, I reckon she has just dropped into a sort of dose, for you must know she was rather on the look out for your return all yesterday, and that fretted her into a worse fever. I don't know how it was, she had her own way of sending to tell you; if she had but left it to me, I'd have had a care there should have been no mistake; but so it was, she kept peering and pining for you all the afternoon, and though it was to be looked for she should not sleep all night, as I told her she might thank herself for managing matters so ill; and so at last she's gone off into a sort of slumber from sheer weakness."

Helen seized the opportunity of escaping from the officious old Dorothy, who returned to take the consignment of her things from the carriage, and with a light tread she stole to the door of her mother's apartment. All seemed perfectly still within. She gently opened the door. There had been no precautions taken to procure the sleep in which her mother's senses had been overcome. The morning sun shone full upon the bed where Helen's anxious eyes were directed.

Mrs. Mordaunt's was a frame where sorrow had preyed upon the substance without defacing the filmy covering. Her clear skin was still free from furrows, though it seemed but to rest upon the bone. Such as she then appeared in that unconscious trance, the interest she must have excited in one less partial than her daughter was beyond that of mere mortal beauty. The hectic spot upon one point of the cheek seemed to touch the long eyelashes which in sleep hung down towards it. Her silken hair, which time and grief had thinned not turned, strayed unconfined over her

pale forehead. The expression of her colourless lips was tranquil and free from pain. Her thin transparent hands, more than any thing else, told the tale of approaching dissolution. Around the bloodless fingers of one hand was twined a long lock of Helen's hair, the other was stretched towards a book of common-prayer which lie open upon the bed. Mrs. Mor-daunt's devotion had never partaken of the character of fanaticism, that mistaken cordial of diseased minds. she thought it best became a sincere penitent to study and practice the plainest precepts of religion, rather than to pride herself upon the gloomy perversion of its most dispused dogmas.

As Helen bent over the still and passionless form, where amid the traces of bodily suffering so much seemed to recall the recollection of recent virtues, so little to confirm the suspicion of former guilt, she felt her throat swelling with a sudden burst of indignation, which being utterly unable to control, she hastily left the room, and then gave vent to the bitter thought: "*He* has dared to defame *her*, and to me!"

After she had to a certain degree succeeded in restoring to herself the degree of composure necessary to prepare her for the interview she must soon have with her mother, she attempted to sustain herself by a survey of the well-known contents of their common sitting-room. Every thing was much as she had left it. Her sketch-book, however, which she had put by was open, as if it had been recently examined. Her birds too had not been neglected, from the appearance of the green food and water in the cages; it seemed as if they must have been replenished no longer ago than the evening before. This was an attention quite out of old Dorothy's line. It must have been her mother then who had thus employed the moments while she had been, as stated, fretting for her return.

She was soon again summoned to the bed room. After the first agitation of meeting had subsided,

Mrs. Mordaunt raising herself said: "And have you not suffered from cold my poor child? I could not sleep till the storm had subsided, with the thought that you might be out in it."

"Think not of me; to find you thus—ill, very ill, I fear," said Helen, unable to bear the unnatural brilliancy of her mother's eye, which alarmed her more than any of the symptoms of decay which she had observed whilst she was still asleep.

"His will be done?" said Mrs. Mordaunt; "it is perhaps on many accounts better as it is. Better for you, I mean, which is my only care. You are formed to ornament society. It would have been out of my power to accompany you into the world; you must have observed that I have always avoided society; I have not been without my reasons for it."

As Mrs. Mordaunt paused, Helen felt a slight shudder, as this conduct of her mother occurred to her in a new light.

She then continued: "I shall never again perhaps be stronger than I am at present, so I may as well now communicate one or two facts with regard to your future circumstances, which it is necessary you should know. It is not much I can bring myself to say, but if I have had, and still have, any concealment from you, it is only what an anxious consideration for your happiness has, upon mature deliberation determined me to pursue."

"There is one, however," thought Helen, "from whom she has had no secret;" and she almost dreaded that in what was about to follow she should hear any allusion to that name, which it would previously have gladdened her heart to have heard mentioned with praise by her mother.

"I will not deny that your absence has been painful to me, but I shall at least die with the consciousness that it has been far from useless to you. The sense of obligation must always be irksome, when gratitude is extracted only by the act itself, and does not flow naturally from regard for the benefactor.

Judge then of the pleasure I derived from the unsuspicious encomiums you passed upon the character of Mr. Oakley, and the gratification you seemed to derive from the intercourse with so superior a person, when I tell you that it is to his bounty that we have latterly owed the means of subsistence; indeed every thing, except the roof over our heads. I can no otherwise diminish your surprise at my acceptance of such a favour than by saying, that your relationship to a member of his family, from whom he derived his property, gave you a sort of claim in equity to his consideration. But oh! Helen! the manner in which it was done, so feeling and delicate, was so like the fine generous creature you described in your letters!"

Helen dropped her head upon the bed to hide her contending emotions, whilst her mother continued:—

"Had it been otherwise, had his disposition been different, fickle, liable to change, or subject to the influence of the baser passions of our nature, the perplexities of the present moment would have been increased tenfold. I hardly know what I would not have endured rather than my child should have been subject to a sudden shock, such as—but what am I saying? I feel that under any circumstances my strength would not have been equal to any further exertion. And I trust in heaven 'tis better as it is. There is an all-seeing eye which penetrates our most secret thoughts and Heaven knows that it is only for my child and her sake that I would——" The rest of the sentence hovered trembling on the mother's lip, but reached not the daughter's ear.

I must draw a veil over their final separation, which, heart-rending as it would have been even if there had been no necessity for reserve, was aggravated by many pangs which the mother feared to communicate.

CHAPTER III.

————— My project may deceive me,
But my intents are fix'd, and will not leave me.
SHAKESPEARE.

HELEN had been but four-and-twenty hours returned when her mother expired in her arms; and as she slowly recovered from the immediate stupor of despair, the first sound that jarred discordantly upon her returning senses was the merry chime of the village bells summoning the rural congregation to morning-service, for it was Sunday.

The powers of sound upon the brain in awakening dormant associations, have been felt by many, independent of time or space. And even in declining life, an accidental imitation of the well-known tone of the bell that used to disturb the slumbers of the schoolboy, has recalled for a moment the remembrance of the long-forgotten hopes and fears of childhood. But the summons, which with its unwelcome jingle and ill-timed cheerfulness now grated upon Helen's ear, was one which had never hitherto been displeasing either to her or her mother. And the last time she had heard it—it seemed but yesterday—how different had been her feelings! In the sameness of their tranquil life, the return of the Sunday had always furnished the principal event, and the consequent periodical return of Mrs. Mordaunt's walk to the parish-church had for some time been the extent of her rambles beyond her own garden. Upon these occasions the severe simplicity, though studied neatness of Mrs. Mordaunt's attire, had added to the impression created by her

striking though no longer blooming figure. And now Helen recalled with an astonishing accuracy the whole of her appearance, dress, and deportment, the last time that they had together started to obey that summons to church. She recollected too, and it was consolatory to her in her present state, the increased cheerfulness with which her mother always returned from thence; but it occurred to her, with some slight sensation of reproach, that she had not then been warned by the first symptom of bodily weakness shown by her mother, in requiring the assistance of her arm on their walk homewards the day before she had last left her on her visit to Lady Latimer.

Still that distractingly cheerful sound continued, and with the desperation with which one sometimes turns one's attention to that which is painful, Helen half opened the window-shutters. It was a bright autumnal morning. At the distance of the garden she could see, on one side, small parties of the peasantry, all in their gayest clothing, and hearts as gay, hastening towards their morning duty, but opposite her own little gate, there was a still, and apparently increasing group, and all, as they passed, paused a minute, as it were, listening on the skirts of this group, and then as they resumed their way, it was easy to observe in the awkward gait of all, and in the unfolded handkerchief of many of the women, that they had just heard heavy news. For Mrs. Mordaunt had been the best of neighbours to the poor, her charity had been, not only of the hand, but of the heart, and there are few so ignorant as not to appreciate the distinction.

From this melancholy sight, Helen turned inwardly to the consolation that she thought she might derive from the good offices of Mr. Saunders, the respectable clergyman, whose influence on his parishioners had only been commensurate to his merit. She mentioned this to Dorothy, with the desire that she might see him after the duties of the day were concluded.

"Aye, I thought of the same thing myself," said Dorothy, "how fashous it was, and how disappointed you'd be when you heard it; why, he's removed too—no, not dead," seeing Helen much shocked,— "he's gotten a better benefice, that's all, and I don't believe there's fifty pound a-year difference; neither; and it was na like him, to leave us all for that, and go among strangers, and here I'm certain there are those who would have made up the difference to keep him—and now we've gotten a beardless boy, that driven himself down in a dog-cart, and that I should guess, had to learn more than to teach. He's civil enough too, for when one of his sporting dogs, nasty brute, strayed into our grounds and destroyed one of your carnation-beds, and my poor mistress was sorely grieved, for she'd cared it every day for your return, and I went to give him a piece of my mind about it, instead of flying out too, he was so sorry, I couldn't say half as much as I meant to have done, and he bid me say he'd rather hang all the dogs he had, than it should happen again. But he's ow'r young for his business, that's certain, and I'm thinking that you'd not like to speak to him yourself; but if you'd leave all to me, to settle about my poor lady's last"—Here even Dorothy's tough nature yielded to her better feelings, and her grief choked her.

"No, I'll go through it all myself, if I can," said Helen.

The Hon. and Rev. Henry Seaford called the next morning, to ask the intentions of the orphan girl as to the funeral of her parent, and Helen forced herself to see him. He was a raw youth just from college, but apparently with the manners of a gentleman, and the feelings of an honest man; very much embarrassed, however, at the distressing situation into which the duties of his new profession had brought him, but probably with nothing but his youth and inexperience, (of which he would soon be cured,) to prevent his adequately fulfilling them. Such as he was, though Helen felt at once that it was impossible for

her to ask or expect any advice from him, on the difficulties of her present situation, which were most seriously aggravated by the removal of her old friend, Mr. Saunders, who would at such a moment, have been an invaluable monitor. But, after she had in some measure, recovered from the effects of the harrowing sight of watching the earth close over the remains of her only acknowledged relation, she felt that it was then for her to decide something as to her future fate.

Whichever way she turned, the prospect seemed gloomy enough; one thing she had firmly resolved, that after Oakley's insulting and offensive allusion to the terms and nature of the provision he had made for her, she would no longer live a dependent upon his bounty; and this she determined to decide irrevocably, as she knew the weakness of her heart, whilst she found it attempting to frame excuses for his conduct, in the excitement, perhaps jealousy of the moment. "No," thought she, "if he heard the case as of an indifferent person, how base would he think her, who, under such circumstances, after such an injury, could consent to continue receiving the offender's stipend?" And thus unconsciously she confirmed her own fears as to the weakness of her heart, by allowing her notions of his opinions to influence her conduct, even in rejecting his assistance.

What was therefore to be done? Sometimes her thoughts turned to Lady Latimer, but her proud spirit could not bear the idea of a life of useless dependence; and then, too, though from Lady Latimer she felt sure she should always receive the most considerate attentions which friendship could offer, yet, even if she had been ready to accept from her substantial assistance, when she recollected, in spite of that lady's brilliant position in the world, how little command of ready money she ever had, she doubted very much whether, without inconvenience, she could supply her to the extent that would be necessary to maintain her as her companion in the world.

This plan, therefore, appeared as impracticable in itself, as unpalatable to her feelings; and as any communication to Lady Latimer would not only probably lead to a proposal of this kind, which she could not accept, but also entail confidences which she would rather avoid, she determined, for the present; to drop any correspondence with her.

She would have found in the old governess, with whom she had first met Lady Latimer, a ready confidant, and a useful assistant in any scheme she might wish to adopt, to make her talents available for her support, but unfortunately, during her absence from home, she, and Lady Latimer, had together regretted the not untimely death of that worthy person.

Having taken the resolution that the best way to rid herself of Oakley's annuity, would be silently to omit to claim it at the bankers where it was deposited, as her feelings told her, that ostentatiously to reject it, would lead to attempts to alter her determination which might harass, but, she thought, could not convince her. She therefore, both as the necessary consequence towards avoiding any attempts of that kind, and, indeed, as the only way of procuring immediate means of subsistence, determined to let her present residence and leave it.

It was necessary to communicate this intention to old Dorothy, though she had not consulted her upon the reasons which had induced her to form it. For Dorothy's was a character which was estimable, only for the perfection of one virtue—fidelity. Hers was not a disposition to conciliate confidence, or to render her services, when not necessary, particularly acceptable. But now that Helen was about to leave all the associations of her childhood, old Dorothy had in her eyes a peculiar value:—she was the only living thing, that could remind her of her mother, and with whom she could have the melancholy pleasure of talking of her that was gone. But besides this, her active services would be useful in disposing of the house, and wherever she afterwards went, till finally settled as

governess in some family, (which was her intention,) the presence of a person of Dorothy's age and appearance, would be a necessary protection to one so young and unguarded.

"You don't know perhaps, Dorothy, how completely a beggar I am left. I have no money, or any means of raising any, except by letting this house."

"Letting this house? and would you think to turn me, in my old days, out of the snug chimney-corner, where I have sat these eighteen years?" answered Dorothy, her first impression partaking rather of the selfishness of age.

"It is no fault of mine, if I am forced to seek a livelihood elsewhere."

"Elsewhere? and whither would you go, Miss, now you are your own mistress?"

"To London, in the first instance," said Helen.

"To London!" screamed Dorothy, "with such a face, and in want too, and let poverty and passion fight which first should ruin you? No, never; if I can prevent it by fair means or foul!"

"My conduct will be neither dependent on place or circumstances," said Helen, rather proudly; for she thought that her ancient attendant rather presumed upon her present situation to give vent to her ill-humour.

"Would I could think it, seeing what I've seen of you and your'n. Well, may peace be restored to those that are gone, and never lost by those that are left?" and her forbidding features were softened by an unusual fervency of expression.

Helen was struck with the apparent confirmation of some dreadful secret hanging over her own birth, and her mother's conduct, which these words seemed to imply, and feared lest the continuation of what Dorothy was evidently preparing to address to her should furnish further proof.

But Dorothy's thoughts had taken another turn, for she began again. "No, I'm clear determined you shall not leave this house if I can help it. I have

not been forty years in service without putting by a penny. You never was a fanciful child: your wants are not hard to tell. You just let me market as I have done, and ask no questions about it; and, on your part, you'll just let me end my days in the old kitchen chimney-corner, which is just the warmest I ever kenned."

Helen was much touched by this proposal, which was both essentially kinder than she could have expected from Dorothy and in its framing more delicate than the old woman's habitual want of manners would have led her to expect; but, as of all species of dependence, it was the least inviting, she was as firm in declining it as profuse in her thanks.

The old woman paused a little, and then, as if armed with sudden resolution, said, "Then I shall just write mysel' to some of your great kin, what claims I know you have upon them."

"How do you mean?" said Helen, with a consciousness that some great disclosure was in Dorothy's contemplation, unwilling to check her, and yet afraid to hear it.

"Why should I fear to tell it? It canna hurt her now; she that has done her best to atone to a Heavenly Father canna fear a frail daughter's forgiveness; and as for you, it was no fault of yours—why should you care that you came into the world with shame, so as you can but go shameless out of it?"

She then gradually unfolded to Helen the history of Mrs. Mordaunt's frailty, such as that lady had herself confessed it to Oakley, only that Dorothy told it in her own way, and much less favourably to Lord Rockington.

"And wasn't it enough to sicken one of vanities, to see what she might have been and what she was? But it was na only by her that I learnt the curse of comeliness. I felt it nearer home—not myself, no—Heaven be praised there never was aught about me to catch a leering eye. But I had once a sister, a gentle, light-haired, blue eyed-girl, with a skin like a

lady's. When she left our home for London, she carried with her the signs of many a stout heart; but she soon forgot them and us, and never wrote more. It was some years after, when I was in my first service in London, I was sent an errand of a moon-shiny night; at the corner of a street, a half-frantic, tipsy creature seized me with horrid loathsome oaths. I turned to free myself. It was my sister Sarah sure enough: but she had no beauty left to boast. No, she had cured herself of that; and, ever since, I can never bring her to my mind, save as I saw her on that awful night. That would have sickened one of good looks; but then, my poor lady, you have seen what a jewel her soul would have been if Providence would only have set it in an ugly case. When I first knew her, she sacrificed every thing to the vain love of her own sweet person; sure she had more temptation than most folk, but it is sad to think of her as of the fallen!"

So thought poor Helen; but though there was much in old Dorothy's relation most painfully interesting, there was nothing that did not rather tend to confirm her in her previous determination to depend upon her own exertions alone for subsistence, rather than run the risk of spreading the disgraceful tale by seeking relief at the expense of reposing confidence.

It required no small powers of persuasion to convince Dorothy that this was a desirable course to adopt. But when, by a display of firmness on her own part, she had made it obvious even to the obstinate old woman, that there was no longer any use in contesting the point;—

"Well then," said Dorothy, "I must e'en trundle off with you, for I have now no other care in this world than to keep you out of harm's way if I can."

The house, through her means, was easily let, furnished, to Mr. Seaford, who preferred it to his own, in which he intended to establish a curate; and the half year's anticipation of the moderate annual rent of fifty pounds was almost all with which

Helen tore herself away from the scenes of her youth.

Upon the journey, and still more upon their arrival in London, she suffered many additional inconveniencies, to which she found the asperities of Dorothy's disposition would constantly subject her. For though it was good feeling which had induced the old woman to determine to follow her young mistress, yet her temper was not improved by the discomforts to which this determination necessarily exposed her. She would, as it appears, have been very ready herself to furnish the means which might have enabled Helen still to live in her own house; but that proposal once rejected, she was not over scrupulous in the demands which her selfish wants made upon the slender purse of her young mistress.

It had been Helen's intention, at first, to endeavour to procure some situation as governess in a good family, for which her accomplishments peculiarly fitted her. But now she found the difficulty of presenting herself any where without recommendation or introduction; and how was she to procure these, without applying to some one who would disclose her actual situation? She therefore determined, for the present, to take a quiet lodging in a respectable part of the town, and support herself by the disposal of fancy-work for some of the bazaars. And it was soon obvious to her, that she must exert herself to the utmost in this line, as, after Dorothy had indignantly rejected several lodgings as uncomfortable, with which she would herself have been very well contented, she was at last obliged to pacify that difficult person by taking one which she herself disliked, and for which she paid a guinea a-week; something more than what she was receiving for the house she had forced herself to quit.

CHAPTER IV.

This fellow pecks up wit, as pigeons peas;
 And utters it again, when God doth please:
 He is wit's pedlar, and retails his wares
 At wakes, and wassels, meetings, markets, fairs;
 And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know,
 Have not the grace to grace it with such show.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Love's Labour's Lost.*

He must be told on't, and he shall; the office
 Becomes a woman best; I'll take't upon me;
 If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister!

SHAKESPEARE.—*Winter's Tale.*

"SEE the conquering hero comes!" said Fitzalbert to Lady Latimer, as from the terrace where they were strolling, they observed Germain arriving at Latimer a few days after the election.

"Very well indeed—nothing could be better, I hear from every body," said Lord Latimer, receiving the new member; "quite perfect from top to toe: it was hard to tell where your exertions were most successful—haranguing on the hustings, or dancing down the dowdies of the ball-room."

"Nay, don't make a merit of that," said Fitzalbert; "'the labour we delight in physics pain;' and our modern Alexander was not without his rival queens. I have not forgotten the soft Statira we met at ———; I hope her foot was lighter on the boards than on the beach; for I remember it left an impression on the soft sand, that would have frightened Robinson Crusoe."

"Perhaps, now she's married, she's on another footing with Germain," added a Mr. Starling, who was one of the party.

Now all this was on many accounts, very disagreeable to Germain; in the first place, it confirmed what he had before suspected, that no part of the ridicule of the meeting on the sands had been lost upon Fitzalbert; but it touched him more nearly, as from thence it was evident that Lady Latimer had, upon her return from the ball, made ludicrous mention of his first partner. And if there could otherwise have been any doubt as to his having been previously talked over on this head before his arrival, the attempt at a joke on the subject by Mr. Starling would have been evidence enough that it was not new to him; for he was one who literally laboured at easy conversation, and it is incredible the midnight toil with which he used to prepare himself to 'hold his own' in the probable topic of the coming day. His great object in life had been to be always favourably received in a certain round of first-rate country-houses; and to prevent the possibility of his being forgotten in his absence, he used to book himself for another visit, in the lady's album, before his departure. Neatness was the leading characteristic both of his person and mind, and this to such a degree, as to give a studied appearance to both. As Fitzalbert, with whom he was no favourite, used to say, "Neither the flow of his curls nor of his conversation seemed natural—both had the appearance of having been previously committed to *paper*." However this might be, neither *papillote* nor common-place book, was ever positively detected by the most prying of housemaids. He never opened his mouth but with an attempt at point at least in the tone of his voice; and when he did not say a good thing, he looked as if he had, which often did just as well.

Having a fair fortune, and being of a good family, he had latterly entertained serious thoughts of endea-

vouring to establish himself by some more permanent tenure in his favourite haunts, and a union with Lady Jane Sydenham had occurred to him as a very agreeable mode of carrying that point.

It happened that at the juncture of this his periodical visit here, Lady Latimer, missing the resource of Miss Mordaunt's society, had felt a wish to have one of her sisters with her; and whether it was from a dislike so far to forward her mother's plans as to ask Caroline to meet Sir Gregory Greenford, who was then staying there, or whether it was merely that she preferred Jane herself, it happened she accidentally so far forwarded Mr. Starling's views as to have Jane to meet him. Lady Flamborough had readily acceded to her daughter Louisa's request to send her youngest sister, from recollecting that Germain would probably be there after the election.

There were few people whom Germain's easy nature could bring him to dislike, but he certainly had rather an aversion to Mr. Starling. This might have arisen merely from the difference of their characters, for nothing could be more perfectly natural and unaffected than Germain; or perhaps he only felt the re-action always caused by hearing a man cried up beyond his merits. But from whatever this arose it made him view with a distaste for which he could not account, Mr. Starling's attentions to Lady Jane. It could be of no consequence to him, and yet the indifference with which she received the studied advances of her methodical admirer, gave him a very high opinion of her discrimination. "She is not so brilliant as Lady Latimer," thought he, "and yet perhaps her taste is more correct"—recollecting a little dispute he had had with her ladyship as to the merits of some namby-pamby verses of Mr. Starling's in her album, to which she might have been supposed to lend rather a favourable ear from its subject-matter, which was a high-flown compliment to herself. Even the theme, Germain declared, had

not been able to inspire the writer with an easy flow, and that his verse merited the name of a *strain*, rather from its apparent effort, than its poetry. But he had by no means undivided leisure for these observations, for there was in what Fitzalbert called "a quiet way," a good deal of play in the evenings at Latimer; and Germain entered into it with an eagerness and avidity, which had only wanted an occasion to call it forth ever since his luck at Peatburn Lodge. This, however, did not now continue the same: the game was chiefly *écarté*, at which both Fitzalbert and Lord Latimer played much better than he did; and though the stakes were not always very high, he found that night after night the difference of play told; and what Fitzalbert called a "quiet way," meant that it was amongst so few, that he had no means of recovering from others what he had lost to him. So that very soon, the balance of what had been called, ever since the play at Peatburn Lodge, "the running account between them," shifted very considerably to the other side. True, he sometimes won a little from Sir Gregory Greenford, but not so much as he might have done, for Fortune seemed at present to have taken the baronet under her most especial protection; so much so indeed, that Fitzalbert said, "there must be witchcraft in it," and that the weird sisters had prophesied of him as of Banquo, "Thou shalt *get kings*, though thou be none:" for hardly a deal passed, without Sir Gregory's marking his Majesty, so that Germain was the chief and constant loser. Whilst this was going on, another new and alluring enticement to expense was opened to him.

"Suppose we go and look at my young things," said Lord Latimer one morning.

"I did not know," said the Count St. Julien, a foreigner on a visit, "dat milord was de papa of any little people."

"Adopted children," answered Fitzalbert, and

they wound their way through a sheltered part of the park, to the paddocks where Lord Latimer's fine stud was to be seen, and examining the foals, they stood for some time learnedly discussing the various merits of little creatures with crooked legs, large knees, no bodies, and bushy tails. From thence they went to the yearlings, and as these galloped gaily round the paddock, Sir Gregory Greenford, who was resting his chin upon the gate, said; "Look at that chestnut, with a white hind leg; I'll bet a hundred to one against him the first time he starts."

"Ten thousand to a hundred, if you please," said Lord Latimer; "his is in a large produce-stake with many others, and we'll make it for that if you like; as I don't wish to tie you down to your offer whenever he starts."

"So be it," said Sir Gregory; "for I'm sure he'll never win a saddle."

"Got a slight strain the other day," whispered Lord Latimer to Fitzalbert, as he was booking the bet; "and still goes short and stiff, but has the best action of the whole set, and seems as if he would beat them all. Take it again."

"Again, a thousand to ten, Sir Gregory?" inquired Fitzalbert; "No, that's enough, I think," answered the baronet; "for I should never forget the thousand, even if it was in no danger; and I doubt whether you would remember the ten pounds, even if you lost it;" and this was supposed to be the sharpest thing Sir Gregory ever said.

"Come Germain, you shall have half my bet," said Lord Latimer; "we must have you upon the turf; I'm sure you will like it."

And so thought Germain, naturally fond of horses and all that concerns them; he had always enjoyed the exhilarating bustle of a race-course as an uninterested spectator; and as a mere means of excitement, it struck him that a fine animal was a happier medium than packs of painted paper.

“And you must come with me next time I go to see my Derby horse,” added Lord Latimer; and an incident which occurred shortly afterwards induced him readily to accept this proposal.

For Germain, in spite of the occasional distraction of play, and the amusement sometimes afforded him by disconcerting some of Mr. Starling's regularly laid approaches to a bon-mot, (an amusement that was not a little increased by his believing that it was equally enjoyed by Lady Jane,) yet in spite of all this, he still was, or fancied himself to be, desperately in love with Lady Latimer, an illusion, if it was one, likely to be very much assisted by the listless, lounging sort of life that he was then leading. His attentions had not been generally remarked by any of the party. Lord Latimer had been so long in the habit of seeing his wife the object of admiration to every one but himself, that he very coolly, and in this instance very wisely, determined to have neither fears nor cares on the subject.

But the apparent earnestness of Germain's devotion to her had more than once been the source of uneasiness to Lady Latimer; for she had really a regard for him, as an agreeable, unaffected, good-humoured addition to her society, and had therefore not the least wish to be obliged to break with him, still less had she the least idea of participating in the warmth of his feelings.

She therefore at last took her resolution, and one morning that they had strolled out together in the park, when he had been unusually sentimental in his adoration, she turned to him with an expression half serious, half playful—

“Did it ever occur to you, Mr. Germain,” said she, “that a person might habituate himself to the soothing effects of small doses of laudanum without the slightest intention of taking it as a poison?”

“A very common case, I believe,” replied Germain, not knowing what was coming next,

"And would it surprise you that such a person should make a distinction between the careful hand that distilled it drop by drop, and the heedless creature that seemed determined to pour down a deadly quantity?"

"What can you mean?" said Germain.

"I dare say you think I'm talking nonsense," replied she, "but it is only very good sense in a thin disguise. You are young in the ways of the world, and must take a little good advice from one who is older. Nay, don't look so shocked at that; I'm not wrinkled yet, I know, but forgive me if I say the fault is on your side for being so very, very young. Must I explain myself further? Most people would think me over candid in saying what I have done.—If admiration has been the cordial draught in the delirium of which I have sought forgetfulness of the aching void within, 'tis a voice, I own, like that of the opium-eater; and like his, habit has made it second nature; but be assured of this, I never mean to *poison* myself—you understand me—and I have said enough when I have added that you are intended for better things than to administer drop by drop my daily dose of flattery; so help me in this crossing." And as she lightly touched the hand he offered, said: "We shall always be friends, I'm certain; and now don't look so doleful, for here comes Fitzalbert, if he suspects any thing, he will quiz *perhaps both*, but certainly *you*."

This was the strongest inducement she could have held out for discretion, and it was not without its effect; and perhaps upon the whole the interruption caused by Fitzalbert was not entirely unwelcome, for however much annoyed Germain might have been at the tone taken by Lady Latimer, there was in her manner, with much kindness, an air of superiority, a coolness, and an entire absence of all embarrassment, which convinced him that remonstrance would have been entirely in vain, and thus his only hope of

continuing her friend, was never to attempt to be more.

It was in the state of things produced by this interview that he thought a little absence would not be amiss, and therefore readily accepted Lord Latimer's proposal to accompany him to see his Derby horse.

CHAPTER V.

I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings.

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER the abrupt termination of Oakley's last interview with Helen, he had quitted Lady Latimer's lodgings in a state of mind bordering on distraction; and could Helen have seen his deportment during the rest of that night, it would have confirmed her first impression, created by his incoherent reproaches, that they could be but the ravings of insanity. He mounted his horse, and rode furiously away, not knowing or caring whither he went; as it was merely from himself and his own reflections that he sought to escape. But the pangs of self-reproach are not so easily avoided, though many were the efforts he made to convince himself that he was not so much in the wrong. He attempted to consider Helen as fickle and frivolous, the child of circumstance, and the willing slave of fashion. But it was all in vain! She always recurred to him patient in suffering loveliness, and bending under a load of grief, the burden of which had been doubled by the ebullitions of his ungovernable temper, and his wanton perversion of a sacred trust.

Towards dawn his horse began to remind him that the reasons for the continuance of their headlong course were not mutual, and he was then not displeased to find that he was quite in a different direction from Goldsborough Park, and much nearer Rockington Castle, to which he determined for the time to turn his steps, as best suited to his present gloomy frame of mind.

The outward appearance of every thing still remained the same—still the same stamp of solitary misanthropy on all around. He would not have been able, even if he had been willing, so soon to remove the desolating, characteristic traces of the late proprietor. But did he himself return the same? In one respect he had certainly maintained to the letter the resolution he had formed upon the acquisition of his property. In all the ordinary every-day relations of life, he had always shown the same cold distrust towards those who sought his favour—the same haughty dislike to stoop to seek the favour of others.

But to this general rule in one instance the noble, and in another, the softer feelings of his nature had sought to establish two exceptions, and in both they seemed to have failed. Patriotic ambition had fired him with a desire to represent his native county in parliament. He had entered into the contest with the most disinterested intentions of benefiting the county by his active services. He had retired from it, the victim, as he thought, of the treachery of false friends, and the corruption of base competitors.— Sometimes, to be sure, in spite of his desire to crush it, there would rise on his mind a suspicion that he might not have been sufficiently gracious upon his canvass, and that individual courtesy was sometimes esteemed no bad criterion of the sincerity of general good intentions.

Of the infinitely more painful impression left by a review of his conduct on the other occasion, he was unable to analyse the mixed nature. The ready relief which in the first instance he had hastened to grant to Mrs. Mordaunt, upon her appeal, was almost the only act in the disposal of his immense property upon which he could reflect with any feelings of peculiar complacency. To many of the more obvious claims upon his liberality to which his present situation had of course exposed him, he had felt averse, from a dislike of the very semblance of ostentation; to some more pressing demands for charity he had

turned a deaf ear, from a constitutional fear of imposition. As to the expense incurred in a contested election, he thought his had been managed with the strictest economy; that is to say, an abuse of money to which few look without regret after success—none after failure. As to the more transient sources of enjoyment which a large fortune opens to him who delights to forget the graver cares in promoting the convivial intercourse of the world, to these his unsocial disposition placed a bar, which he had not as yet attempted to surmount.

From the first, therefore, he had experienced no pleasure from the possession of his splendid property, equivalent to that of placing the child of his benefactor above want. Afterwards, upon becoming acquainted with her, this satisfaction was blended with sensations of a stronger nature; and the impression made upon him was more powerful in proportion, as his heart was not habituated to feelings of this description. He would then have thought no sacrifice on his part too great to insure her happiness; and so far from considering the circumstance of her birth as a degradation, he only esteemed it an additional reason why he should endeavour to be the medium of endowing with his uncle's worldly goods the only living relic he had left behind him.

And yet in an unguarded moment of passion, all these hopes and intentions had been overthrown. Though he would not have endured that any other person should insinuate that Helen was other than perfect, yet had his distrustful nature allowed him to imbibe the most absurd suspicions, and the most ridiculous jealousy, and under their influence to forget himself so far as to make disclosures which he could never sufficiently repent.

The longer he remained at Rockington Castle, the more acutely did these reflections prey upon his harassed mind. Every thing that reminded him of his uncle, gave him an additional pang of self-reproach, ashamed, as he could not but be, of having

been the means of publishing his foibles where he would most have wished them concealed. Every time that he passed by the gallery where hung the portrait of Lord Rockington, which, from the first, had made so strong an impression upon his imagination, it recalled to his recollection the indignant expression which Helen's countenance had assumed when repelling his insinuations against her friend.

All this he forced himself for some time to suffer, till he at last became sensible that he ought no longer to delay returning to Goldsborough Park, where many matters of various descriptions required his presence. One of the most urgent, was the state of the borough from which the park took its name.

Goldsborough was a neat little market-town, situated just at the park-gate. It had no peculiar claims to consequence, founded on trade, or manufactures, but it abounded in those never-failing signs of independent competency, green doors, with bright brass knockers, fenced in by white railings, containing five feet of gravel walk, and as much of border on each side crowded with hollyoaks and sun-flowers.

In the most of the dwellings so situated, resided the electors, who had been long accustomed to attend to the wishes of their near neighbours at the park, in the choice of their members. In the early part of Lord Rockington's life, this had not been without its advantages, as far as a quiet little inland market-town, with no particular pretensions of any kind, could desire. Latterly this interest had been kept up, as much as was in his power, by Mr. Gardner, and was one of the many instances in which he had attended to his employer's interests beyond the strict line of his duty.

Since Oakley had come into possession, he had given many causes of offence: not the least was, that from a dislike to intrusion upon his privacy, he had shut up the park, and by that means deprived the corporation and the wives of its members of their regular Sunday stroll, where from time immemorial,

they had always carved true love upon the trees, and picked chicken bones under them. This had been a grievous offence, and had been aggravated by many other instances of neglect: so much so, that when Oakley wished, in case he should fail in the county, at least to gain a seat in parliament by returning himself for Goldsborough—unexpected grumblings occurred. These, however, were luckily checked, instead of encouraged, by one of the leading members of the corporation the ex-mayor, whose consequence shone conspicuous in double the usual width of white rail, and double the usual width of gravel-walk.

This gentleman was a retired member of the medical profession, and during a successful practice, had been present at most of the exits and entrances that the fluctuating population of the neighbourhood had been subject to, for twenty years. He was a very worthy man, and a very popular character in the town, and finding his leisure hang rather heavy on his hands, it had occurred to him that he might as well turn his attention from physical to political constitutions, and take to prescribing for the state.

The representation of his native town seemed quite within the reach of his ambition, and he thought that to enter into such a compromise with Oakley, as to share the representation with him as his colleague, would be the best means of obtaining that object.

Oakley at this moment was rather harassed with the difficulties of the county election, and only anxious to secure his own return. Entertaining notions on the subject of reform, which were incompatible with dictation if he had had the power to enforce it, (which he had not,) and having no friend of his own to propose, he made no objection. The other eleven electors on their part, were quite satisfied with such an indication of their independence, as taking away from Oakley the nomination to one of the seats, and not a little pleased with the manner of doing it, by making a 'parliament man' of one of their own body. The medical member, however, soon afterwards found

his fellow-townsmen not a little dissatisfied with his colleague's subsequent conduct. His absence at the election had been easily accounted for, by his being occupied with the county contest; but they did not by any means approve, subsequently to his defeat, of his not coming near them, or taking any notice of his new constituents. This having been communicated to him by his colleague, had determined him to go back to Goldsborough; and as he had felt the inconvenience of indulging his natural disposition, he arrived among the electors with a resolution to be as civil and courteous as possible.

He had arrived late one night at the park, and as he was coming down stairs the next morning, he already found symptoms, as he thought, of his new colleague having arrived, for he saw, pacing round the space before the door, two saddle-horses, the collar-marks on whose necks seemed to indicate that their matching so well was not accidental. On the back of one, was a saddle of the most brilliant newness, the other was mounted by a gawky lad, who had of course, the brevet rank of groom, though his dress, consisting of a cerulean coloured frock-coat and red plush breeches, with gaiters, showed that his avocations were not limited to the stable department.

Oakley, descending to the saloon, and not meeting the servant who was in search of him to announce the visitor, there encountered, not his colleague the ex-mayor, and new member, but our old acquaintance, Captain Wilcox, who had recently established himself in the neighbourhood, and was come to pay his respects.

It will be recollected, that Mr, Gardner had been very anxious that Oakley should purchase a freehold property then on sale, which over-looked his grounds; but he, suspicious that there was some advantage intended to be taken of him in the business, had not been able to make up his mind to give an assent.

This property had fallen into the hands of Captain Wilcox, who being desirous to change his ingots for acres, had immediately set about building upon it.—

As Oakley never encouraged his steward to make communications of this kind, they were no longer made to him; and as it was quite dark when he arrived the night before, he had not seen any symptoms of recent proprietorship.

He had never previously been acquainted either with his new colleague or new neighbour, and there was nothing in the appearance of the gentleman whom he found in the saloon, which might not as well belong to a retired member of the medical, as of the military profession, or at all to indicate the sort of deaths in which he had formerly dealt. He therefore acted upon his lately-formed determination to be peculiarly civil, and welcomed his visiter with great courtesy. Encouraged by this, (for he had previously been a little abashed at the idea of Oakley's stiff manner,) the captain began.

"Allow me, sir," said he, "to offer my compliments upon your return."

Oakley, who imagined this to refer to his election, answered very graciously: "you must allow me to say, I consider you as the cause of my return."

"Oh, you are a great deal too good to say so, but I hope we shall be mutually agreeable in our new situation."

"I can assure you, such is my intention."

"I hope, too, that you will acquit me of wishing to intrude myself upon what you may almost have considered as your property."

"Indeed, nothing can be farther from my notions, than to reckon as property, what can neither be bought nor sold; I considered it as a sacred trust, and am perfectly satisfied as it is."

"Oh, you thought it trust-property, and not to be bought; and, to be sure, you ought to be satisfied, for you had pretty pickings without buying a bit—but I was very anxious to purchase a seat."

"You surely don't mean," said Oakley, "that you have paid for it?"

"Indeed, but I have, and much more since. The

house, I hope, will be an object you will rather like to look to."

"I have always considered it the great object of my admiration and envy."

"Oh, let me beg at least you'll never think of making speeches," said the captain, rather overpowered with the apparent hyperbole of the expression.

"Sir!" said Oakley, surprised in his turn; and then checking himself, he added, "I can only repeat, that my great desire has for some time past been to be in it."

"I'm sure I shall be most happy to see you there, and so will my Fanny," moving to depart.

"Who?" inquired Oakley, completely puzzled.

"Fanny, my Fanny—Mrs. Wilcox. I dare say you can see her in the garden from this window," drawing aside the blind, and disclosing for the first time, to Oakley's horror, a staring half-finished bright brick tenement upon a rising knoll, only half a mile from him.

"Upon my word you are right, sir; Wilcox House is a very fine object for you from hence. I thought of calling it Wileox Abbey, for the stable has a high narrow window in it, but *House* sounds more snug and substantial. Oh yes, I declare that will be delightful for you: you can distinguish Mrs. Wilcox in her yellow gown among the roses. You'll excuse me, sir, I've not let her wear a green gown since the election. You'll excuse me,—I'm glad to see it's all 'forget and forgive,' and that we shall always be as neighbourly as if nothing had happened. We are almost within *hail*, and quite within *call*,—you understand the difference."

With this he took his leave, smirking and bowing, and so much pleased with the reception given him in the early part of his visit, as to be unconscious of the sudden change in Oakley's deportment at the concluding discovery he had made as the captain began his last speech, the course of which he would have doubtless interrupted immediately, had there not been

something so painfully ludicrous in the situation, that he felt his tongue tied at the moment.

Long after his visiter had left the room, and even after he had, with much effort and no slight fear, restored himself to his new saddle, and departed. Oakley continued gazing with uncontrolled disgust at the obtrusive expanse of red brick before him; and it was no pleasant part of his reflections, that this he might have prevented if he had not chosen, without any adequate ground, to suspect Mr. Gardner of intending to deceive him. Now he would gladly have given five times the sum to be able to toss it, brick by brick, into the river; but from what he had seen of the situation in life and manners of his late visiter, it was evident that this would not now be so easy, and that the captain would probably consider one of the great advantages of a long purse, the power of boasting that he was above being bought out; and that, if he once found how galling his late acquisition was, the idea of elbowing a grandee would add much to the value of the property in his eyes.

Still, as he walked from window to window, there it was, staring him full in the face; he felt it impossible to bear this, and therefore abandoning his good intentions of propitiating his constituents, which had so unfortunately been baulked when he was prepared to put them into practice, he determined, as the season was advanced, and parliament about to meet, to start for London.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh that I knew he were but in by the week!
How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,
And wait the season, and observe the times,
And shape his service wholly to my behests.

SHAKESPEARE.

A SIMILAR concurrence of circumstances had brought up to the metropolis most of the other individuals, in whom it is hoped the reader is interested. Germain had not returned to Latimer, after having accompanied his lordship to see his Derby horse. He was not yet quite reconciled to the new footing upon which he must be prepared to meet Lady Latimer; and as her treatment of him had left that feeling of vague dissatisfaction which is exactly the state when any new excitement is most welcome, he had been very much amused with all Lord Latimer had let him into, of the mysteries of the training-stable: and having been allowed to be present at a most satisfactory trial of the Derby horse, he had eagerly accepted Lord Latimer's offer to let him stand half of his bets upon him; and upon coming to town, had backed him himself to a large amount, and in his usual sanguine disposition, began to reckon what he might win upon him as part of the available funds of the season.

If he had ever thought much upon such a subject, he might sometimes have been rather uneasy as to the state of his finances. The election, though Lord Latimer and several others had literally fulfilled their engagement of sending up all the votes they could influence, free of expense to him, had nevertheless been

a heavy drain upon his resources; and there was more truth than Lady Flamborough had been willing to believe in Major Sumners's story, that he had forestalled much of his ready money at Paris during his minority.

Among the few people already come to town upon his first arrival, he found Lady Flamborough and her daughter, Lady Jane, who had been taken up by her mother at Latimer on her way to town. This was a time of the year peculiarly favourable to Lady Flamborough's manœuvring—no bustle or distraction, and her house really a resource to those who happened accidentally to be in town. Amongst them, too, were such fine subjects as young men driven up from hunting by the weather, when every thing is frozen but their hearts—then such fine opportunities afforded to ripen real flirtations, or give a colourable appearance to incipient ones; by nightly parties in private boxes to the play. But though Lady Flamborough did not on that account desist from her customary attempts to attract all she could, yet the object of her particular pursuit certainly was Germain. On this, however, as on former occasions, she found her daughter by no means a ready assistant. Nature had gifted Lady Jane with both delicacy and judgment, which were equally *de trop* when she was desired to forward some of her mother's schemes.

Upon her first introduction to Germain, she had been inclined to view him with a favourable eye, as a pleasant, unaffected young man; and had his attentions then been directed towards her, it is probable they might not have been unwelcome: but she had seen him, as she had seen many others, dazzled by the brilliancy of her sister's beauty, and forgetting every body else in his exclusive devotion to her. Though she knew that this would end as she had seen more than one other affair of the same kind, yet it prevented her from thinking any more about him till they next met after the election at Latimer. There, the humorous manner in which he had sometimes conspi-

red with her to thwart Mr. Starling, had established a sort of confidential understanding between them; and though his still obvious attentions to her sister made her view him in no other light than as an agreeable acquaintance, yet it certainly was with pleasure she heard of his arrival in London—a feeling that would have been more conspicuous in her welcome to him, had she not been afraid of the inferences her mother would immediately draw, and the schemes she would immediately found upon any reciprocal cordiality at first meeting.

A few days afterwards, when at breakfast with her daughters, Lady Elmborough said, “Pray, Jane, how long is it since you have taken a dislike to Mr. Germain?”

“What makes you ask that mamma? I am not conscious of any such feeling.”

“Then I must say you were most pointedly rude to him last night.”

“Indeed! I listened to all his remarks most attentively, and answered all his questions most categorically, even when I had rather have listened to the play.”

“No; what I mean is, that when he offered to call the carriage and get your shawl, you in the mean time accepted old Lord Chelsea’s arm, and when Germain returned, he found you thus occupied.

“Well but, mamma, if Mr. Germain, instead of being an easy *insouciant* acquaintance, was the most captious of lovers, he never could be jealous of old Lord Chelsea.”

“All I know is, when he came jumping up the stairs, he ran against Lord Chelsea and nearly knocked him over, for the poor old lord is not very steady upon his legs; and as soon as he saw who it was he was handing, it was evident he was very much disappointed, and indeed so confused, that you might have observed he huddled all our shawls upon you, and my fur tippet into the bargain.”

"Well, but if I did discompose a young gentleman, I delighted an old one. Poor Lord Chelsea! he is never so happy as when he is, as he thinks, protecting a young lady; and with all the ridicule of his tottering gallantry, he is really so good-natured, and what is no small merit in an old beau, so uniformly cheerful, that I could never bear to affront him by refusing his proffered assistance."

"All this would be very well, if it was merely a matter of indifference between the two: but I suppose you have no thoughts of marrying Lord Chelsea?"

"Not exactly," said Lady Jane, smiling.

"And I suppose you don't mean to say the same of Mr. Germain?"

"Exactly, mamma."

"And what, may I ask, is your objection to him?"

"That is not the question, my dear mamma. Even *you* don't mean me to propose to him, and he doesn't mean to propose to me."

"But I think he does. Why did he fasten himself to the back of your chair all the night, where he could not see a bit of the play, whilst there were front places vacant? Or why is he in town at all now, instead of being at Latimer? Indeed, even Fitzalbert said, that last time he was there, he did all in his power to thwart Mr. Starling in his attempts to make up to you—and I can assure you, I sometimes think that all the attention he paid to Louisa arose from his liking to you."

"That never occurred to me, certainly," said Lady Jane; "but even if it is the case, he ought to furnish me with some *double* of himself, to whom alone can I be obliged to acknowledge my sense of his favourable opinion."

"Well, I must say, I think it very ungrateful of you," observed Lady Flamborough, provoked at the apparent impossibility of bringing Lady Jane seriously to the point. "Caroline shows much more good

sense and respect for my experience in these matters; and both of you know that there is nothing I dislike so much as your making any advances to men; therefore you might trust to my opinion. You may recollect, Jane, how much I lectured you at Boreton against encouraging Major Sumner."

Lady Jane could have replied, that there might have been other reasons for this, besides the mere impropriety of the act; but she prudently checked herself, and handed her mother her replenished tea-cup without further reply, while Lady Flamborough continued.

"There's Caroline, you see, succeeded in persuading Sir Gregory Greenford not to return to Melton till after he had accompanied us to the play last night. How did he take leave of you, my dear?—did he mention any time for his return?"

"Oh, yes! he said he should see me on Monday if he was *alive*; for that Fencer, and five other famous hunters, were for sale that day at Tattersall's."

"Ay! then I suppose we shall have your brother Flamborough up too. I am afraid it will be impossible ever to make any thing of him: he is not the least improved in his taste since, as a little boy, he used to steal the napkins that were laid for dinner, to make horse-cloths for his poney, that he might ride round the field like a groom at exercise. He is now near twenty, and if he would ever show himself in good society, who knows but Miss Stedman, old Stedman's only child and heiress, who is coming out this year, might take a fancy to him? And it would be very convenient, for certainly your poor father was unaccountably careless, and left his property terribly embarrassed."

The young ladies had nothing to say in defence of their brother, and were perhaps not a little relieved that their mother's schemes were no longer exclusively confined to them: and the conversation dropped.

The winter passed over—the season advanced—and London rapidly filled. The play-houses were no long-

er 'the thing,' and even the exclusive attraction of the opera (that pet preserver of flirtations) was broken in upon by engagements of various kinds. Parliament too had met, and necessarily occupied both Germain and Oakley much. Not that they entered into their duties by any means with equal avidity. Germain executed the business of his constituents faithfully and punctually, because he considered himself bound to do so; but it was by no means an occupation of first-rate interest to him. He was always easily led, and was unfortunately much *recherché* in a very agreeable society, the members of which always preferred a dinner to a debate, thinking that they could not live without the one, but that they might vote without the other. He therefore was in the frequent habit of *pairing* till ten o'clock—a practice founded on a compromise of conscience, which makes a man satisfied at voting on a question of which he knows nothing, provided one on the other side is equally ignorant. Upon his return, he would attempt sometimes to force his attention to a speech for a couple of hours, and wonder he did not understand the reply to an argument which he had not heard.

Nor was this all: it was not only that he often felt distracted with the recollections of the early and convivial part of the evening, but the anticipation of the excitement with which it was to conclude, often gave a sense of tedium to the course of a sometimes dull, always unnecessarily protracted debate. When a man does not know whether, before the night is over, a shake of the dice or a shuffle of the cards may not, without any reason at all, make a difference to him which he shall feel for years, he is not in the frame of mind most favourable for digesting a train of abstruse reasoning in which he can have no immediate interest. No possible combination of numbers that the division can produce; will excite a care in one pre-occupied with the simple difference between eleven and deuce-ace. And this it was, I am sorry to

own which often made Germain's parliamentary career less interesting to him than he had anticipated.

Not so Oakley. To him the House was all in all. That it was a ready excuse for avoiding that society which otherwise his situation in the world might have forced upon him, was an additional recommendation in his eyes. He entered into all its proceedings with an intense interest to be expected from the singleness of his feelings. He had, upon sundry occasions, taken part in its deliberations with credit to himself.—The earnest sincerity with which he spoke had never failed to win attention, though some of his opinions were reckoned rather extraordinary, or what in party slang is called *crotchety*. The excitement he here experienced, absorbed for the time that discontent, with which his experience of the world had tainted him, and for the moment he thus forgot the anguish and self-reproach caused by his own conduct upon the occasion of his most recent disappointment—a feeling which, however, never failed to accompany him upon his return home.

CHAPTER VII.

—— His addiction was to courses vain,
 His companies unlettered, rude, and shallow,
 His hours filled up with riots, banquets, sports;
 And never noted to him any study,
 Any retirement, any sequestration
 From open haunts and popularity.

SHAKESPEARE.

"ALMACK's is sadly gone off this year," said a lady whose single subscription was out. "I shan't go there any more."

I only believed the last part of what she said. I should have been sorry to have found the first true; for in spite of the murmurs of turbulent spirits, who describe it as a sort of a female Holy Alliance, conspiring to as absolute a dominion over the persons, as their male prototypes did over the minds of mankind, there is no comparison either as to the disinterestedness or benefit of the two institutions. Dr. Paley (an odd authority about Almack's) says of civil government, that obedience to it must be founded on one of three things—prejudice, reason, or self-interest. Now as to one of these, reason, perhaps, like Joseph Surface's honour, we had better 'leave it entirely out of the question:' but I shall be satisfied if I can ground obedience to this petticoat republic upon the other two; as a majority of the doctor's three elective foundations. Prejudice is rather a question for the past than the future; but that Almack's has such a proscription in its favour, is attested sufficiently in the shoals of little three-cornered applications which, on every succeeding Monday, for seasons past, have

drifted down St. James's Street—the answers to which have been anxiously expected by rank, fashion, and beauty. But that self-interest is concerned in its perpetuity, I think I shall have no difficulty in proving, as much among many who never entered its walls, as from its regular frequenters. To the latter it must certainly be preferable to be sure, at least one night in the week, of meeting in a room where there is elbow-room to dance and be seen, than to spend one half of the evening jammed fast upon some ladder-like staircase, and the rest in hunting from house to house the somebody who is hunting them elsewhere.

But what a blessing it is to the papas and elders of families whose abomination is a ball! It enables them to satisfy their daughters with a few seven shillings' worth of gaiety, whereas otherwise they must each in turn have been turned out of their house because their wives were "at home,"—have probably been kept in town till after their hay was cut and their turnips sown, waiting for a night, and the next morning be condemned to sit grumbling over the bills in a study that still bore traces of having acted the part of supper-room the night before.

"But then," say the opponents of Almack's, "such a foolish fuss as is made about tickets, and such a ridiculous favour in granting them!" If this is so depend upon it, it is in that more than either the cheapness or convenience of the institution that its attraction consists. Difficulty of access can make even dullness desired—and exclusion would give a fictitious value to the amusements even of the Escorial. The court is in most countries the criterion of society; but for many years in England the patronesses of Almack's have been the ladies commissioners for executing the office of court.

Such as it is, with all its exaggerated pretensions and demerits, it was attended upon the last night of the first set by most of the persons whom the reader of these pages would expect to find there. Lady Latimer had not previously appeared any where since her

arrival in town. She had remained at Latimer quietly during the last few weeks, the interval between the breaking up of the members of the last *battue* at the close of the shooting season, and their departure for London, being the only break in upon Lord Latimer's otherwise unceasing round of boundless hospitality. This short period of repose had in this instance been unwelcomely intruded upon by his man of business, who begged to press upon his consideration the increasing difficulty he found in supplying funds for this unlimited expense.

But Lord Latimer never either would or could understand how a man of his rent-roll could be embarrassed.. "Besides, his Whisker colt would win the Derby, and that would be ten thousand more than usual this year." As his communications with his lady were never frequent or detailed, he had at least the good taste to take care that those he did make should not be disagreeable. He therefore hinted nothing about the disorder of his circumstances, and she remained unconscious of any difficulties of the kind.

Lady Latimer had not met Lady Boreton since they separated before the election. But as her manner towards that lady had always been rather civil than cordial, she had no difficulty, particularly as she was on the winning side, in being just as glad to see her as usual; and if Lady Boreton on her side felt any coolness, she did not think Almack's the right place to show it

"Is Miss Mordaunt still with you?" said Lady Boreton, wishing to start an indifferent subject.

"No," replied Lady Latimer; "she left me some months since, on account of illness in her family, and I have since been unable to hear any thing of her, though I have written several times to the place I thought she lived at. By the by, perhaps, as it is in his neighbourhood, your friend Mr. Oakley might be able to give me some information about her. Is he here?"

"No—this is not exactly in his line. He is probably attending his duty at the House. I see Mr. Germain is here." And the patriotic lady was content at thus far hinting her opinion of the mistake the county had made in its choice between the two candidates.

"It is certainly very noisy here," said Lady Flamborough, from a seat under the orchestra, where she had established herself with her two daughters. "Can you see, Jane, who that is Mr. Germain is talking to, there on the other side of the opposite rope?"

"I can only see the top of her head; but it looks to me like Lady Singleton's eternal coral comb."

"I can't stand this noise any longer," said Lady Flamborough; and accordingly when it had entirely ceased at the end of the quadrille, and the fall of the ropes left a free passage across the room, she made the best of the way across, steering by Lady Singleton's coral comb. Her ladyship she found stationary where she expected; but Germain was flown. She was in despair. Again seating herself between her girls on the nearest sofa, her quick eye caught the figure of Germain strolling listlessly that way between the hind sofa and the wall.

"You'd better sit up there behind, Jane, and leave room for Lady Boreton here. I am very anxious to speak to Lady Boreton."

This succeeded perfectly; for though Lady Boreton seemed to have much more to say to her than she had to Lady Boreton, yet she had still opportunity to observe, whilst apparently listening attentively, that Germain made a full stop behind that part of the back sofa where she had posted Lady Jane, and seemed, in spite of his position blocking up the passage, not the least inclined to move.

"I have been telling Flamborough," said Fitzalbert, coming up to Lady Flamborough, "that he ought to have Smith to cut his hair. He has come here with a head like a stable-boy's."

"Is that your son?" said Lady Boretton. "I never saw him before. What is his turn? Is he literary?"

Lady Flamborough hesitated how to answer this query, but Fitzalbert replied for her: "Oh yes! very. He made a book *upon the Oaks* last year."

"A pastoral poem, I presume," said Lady Boretton, to whom he spoke in enigmas.

"Not exactly: a modern eclogue," said Fitzalbert, laughing; and here the subject of the conversation joined them. At the same moment the music struck up, and Lady Flamborough's eyes glistened with pleasure as she saw Lady Jane working her way through the defile of the sofa, led by Germain. But her happiness was short-lived. They were met by young Lord Flamborough, who said: "Oh, by the by, Germain, you are a member of ——'s Club. I wish you would just go there, and help to make a ballot for me, for I am up to-night."

"But I am just going to dance with your sister. Afterwards I will go, if there is still time."

"But there won't be time; and I've just got the number if you'll go; and I'm sure Jane don't care about dancing with you—she'll find plenty of partners here."

"Flamborough, for shame," said his mother half aside: "what does it signify to you to belong to ——'s Club? I am sure you are just as well without being a member of it."

"But I am not just as well without it," said he; "for it would be somewhere to pass my evenings, without the bore of staying at home, or the trouble of dressing."

"You had better go if you don't much dislike it," whispered Lady Jane to Germain, "for if you don't we shall never hear the last of it at home. A wilful child, you know—and that's what he is—must have his way."

So pressed, Germain's good-nature urged him to go, accompanied by Fitzalbert, whose prophetic spi-

it, as to the future situation in the world of a noble minor with a large rent-roll, prevented his openly showing all the contempt he felt for young Lord Flamborough: but as he descended the stairs with Germain, he broke out—"A most unlicked cub, indeed. This comes of boys playing at men without first learning the game."

And so ended Lady Flamborough's hopes for the evening. Neither Fitzalbert nor Germain returned. The fact was, that as the result of the ballot produced only *one white ball* out of *twelve*, it was impossible that they could both have played their young friend fair; and though from the openness and good-nature of Germain's character, it was next to impossible that he should be suspected of such treachery, yet it was an awkward state of things for any of the party to have to explain, where the odds were just eleven to one against your being believed. So they determined to stay where they were, and sit down to *écarté*, an arrangement that was mutually agreeable, and peculiarly advantageous to Fitzalbert.

At last, at three o'clock, all hopes of their re-appearance having been lost by Lady Flamborough, she had her carriage called. "Home," yawned out her ladyship to the sleepy footman, and "Home" was repeated to the no less sleepy coachman; and it was expressed through the medium of the whip to the more sleepy horses.

Lady Flamborough drew up the side window. This is a moment of the four-and-twenty hours most dreaded by young ladies who are in the habit of suffering under maternal lectures; the only protection upon such an occasion being the actual presence of a good match, who has incautiously accepted the offer to be set down: otherwise the drive home is the opportunity most usually taken by the chaperon, (whose temper has not been improved by the tedium of the last few hours,) to comment upon awkwardnesses committed or oversights observed; to expatiate upon the encouragement of "detrimentals," or the slight

of good parties; to inveigh against the sin of having said too much; to inquire into the misfortune of having danced so little.

It was a part of the evening to which both Lady Caroline and Lady Jane, but particularly the latter, always looked forward with horror. But in this instance they felt safe. Their brother had been the great delinquent, and accordingly Lady Flamborough began: "I must say, you behaved very ill, Flamborough, in quite spoiling the evening by sending away Mr. Germain and Fitzalbert."

"I am sure there were enough people left there without them. I know I wish there had been one less, and that's myself. I don't know why you made me come. I hardly knew a woman there, except old Lady Marsden, who used to come to my father's; and she asked me how my little poney was, as if I was a child still."

"I am sure you behave very like one," said his mother, who here broke off the conversation, not wishing to prolong the dispute at the imminent risk of losing the little influence she still possessed over him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—Oh! and is all forgot?

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the name of Miss Mordaunt was mentioned to Lady Latimer casually at Almack's by Lady Boreton, she really felt at the moment more uneasiness as to the fate of her young friend, than would have been believed by any who saw the radiant smile of conscious beauty with which she received the next passing acquaintance. A London spring is not the season best calculated for the cultivation of the softer sympathies of our nature, which flourish rather in shade and solitude, and are parched up beneath the scorching sunshine of the ball-room. Yet often in the course of the evening did Lady Latimer, while watching the gay groupes, amongst which she saw none so fair, wonder what could have become of Helen Mordaunt.

Little did she think how near her in local position, but how estranged by change of circumstances, her former protégée at that moment was!

It was almost within sound of the merry music, the highest notes of which came upon her ear, mingled with the oaths of drunken coachmen, and the frequent lashing of whips, that Helen Mordaunt sat in her solitary lodging, endeavouring to eke out a scanty subsistence, by protracting even to that late hour, such work as candlelight did not prevent her from executing.—Her difficulties had latterly much increased. It has

been mentioned that Dorothy had taken upon herself to exercise the right of placing a veto on the choice of many a humbler, but cheaper, and equally convenient lodgings, with which Helen would have been well contented. But though her choice had been at last consulted, this had not prevented her from soon finding as many faults with that which had been taken, as if she had been the unwilling party, and she took a very inconvenient mode of justifying herself from the imputation of unfounded caprice, by being very soon laid up with a really severe fit of rheumatism. This is an infliction which never improves any temper; but upon Dorothy its effects were dreadful. It required Helen's almost angelic patience to bear with her mingled ebullitions of pain and passion. The disorder not only prevented Dorothy from lending her that small assistance which, considering herself always more in the light of a duenna, than an attendant, she had ever attempted, but it made her conceive that she had a constant claim upon Helen's attention to all those alternate complaints about herself, and lectures to her young mistress, which, now that she was bodily disabled, formed her sole occupation. London was her never-failing theme of abuse.

"It was but to be expected that I should lose my precious health; I, a sober well-conditioned body when I came, God forgive me! to such a sink of iniquity! What with the draughts down the streets, and the damp, and fog, and bad air—no one could live in it but by drunkenness, and debauchery; and that I should have been over-persuaded by a foolish girl, that's like enough to go the way she should not!"

Much of this was often muttered to herself, or so interspersed with groans, that Helen did not feel obliged to take any notice of it, which she knew from experience of her old nurse's character, had she done would only have made bad worse. She was often inconveniently interrupted in her own work, by piteous requests, that she would alter the position, or

make some other attempt to alleviate the pain of the sufferer.

She had also other annoyances, arising from disappointments. With the sanguine expectations of youth she had never doubted that those talents and accomplishments, which had always met with the ready encomiums of frivolous equals, when only exercised for her own amusement, would be eagerly purchased, when offered for sale for her support. The repose of a constant residence in the country, and the habits of occupation thus engendered, had caused her much to excel in all sorts of fancy-work, and any little specimens, whether of drawing, or some other device, which had been casually observed at Boreton Park, had always been the theme of unqualified admiration; for at that time it would have been treason against good taste, not to admire any thing that had been touched by the fair hands of Miss Mordaunt. But when, in the full confidence of the impression thus created, she completed some articles of the same kind, with infinite care, and offered them to a shop-woman at the bazaar, who retailed toys and trinkets, she tossed them slightly over, saying, "Very pretty, I dare say; not that I'm much of a judge of these things myself; but I'll tell you what, they won't do. The ladies have taken to this sort of thing themselves, and there's an end to employment for the like of you; for though I dare say it would be as great a charity as any, if I was to give you, my young woman, half what they get for theirs, yet I should be out of pocket by it, for nobody will buy those sort of things, unless all the world knows they're doing a charity. However, if you like to leave them here, you may, and then they'll be seen, you know; and if I can get any thing for them, why, I'll account to you, that's all;—and as you seem an ingenious sort of body, if you could hit upon something new, such as has never been seen, why, I'd make it worth your while to have puzzled it out a bit."

Disheartened by the reception of her first effort,

yet having no resource, Helen left them as desired, and returned home with the vague hope of being able to invent something which should have the charm of novelty, and therefore be more attractive.* This, trifling as the resource may seem, occupied her more than if it had been the mere labour of the fingers in which she was engaged, and therefore prevented her from reflecting so incessantly upon the dreariness of her situation.

At length, having succeeded, as she thought, in producing several little fancy articles of different descriptions, which had some novelty in their design, she again returned with them to the same stand in the bazaar. She was more favourably received than the first time, and she observed that the things she had then left had disappeared. "A friend of hers," the woman said, "after she had been tired to death of every thing there, had, at length, consented to take them cheap, as part of the stock she must get in, for a new shop at a distant watering-place, before the next season;" and with this she handed over to Helen a poor pittance, which was certainly not what she ought to have got for them, but, at the same time, more than Helen, discouraged by her first accounts had latterly expected them to produce. The woman was more liberal in her remuneration for some of those last brought, with one or two of which she was particularly pleased, and desired Helen to keep herself incessantly employed, in as many exact repetitions of the same articles as she could execute, to be furnished in as short a time as possible.

It was in this tedious mechanical labour that Helen had been without intermission engaged, even to the late hour mentioned above. Her spirits were completely exhausted, and her health began to suffer under confinement to which she was so little accustomed, and the atmosphere, too, of the rooms, which Dorothy regulated by her own rheumatism, was often oppressively close. Having, at length, finished her task, so as to be able to take it to the bazaar the next day, she

threw up the window for air; and as the chill night wind rushed into the apartment, it brought with it the confused noise of the bustle below, and the often-repeated cry of "Lady Latimer's carriage," struck upon Helen's ear. As she listened, past times and changed circumstances rushed upon her recollection.

"How differently," thought she, "have the last few hours been passed by Lady Latimer, and by one who, but some short weeks since, she would never have allowed to be considered as other than her equal in every thing—the partner in all her pleasures—concurrent in taste—and alike even in dress?" And with this, came across her the recollection of the unlucky ball-dress of the election night, and all the mischief that had been caused by the colour of a ribbon—"and can she then so soon have forgotten me?"

She could just distinguish the carriage which she knew contained her friend, and as its rumbling sound slowly died away in the distance,—“Even so,” thought she, “has all trace of her she formerly loved, faded away from her mind.”

But a moment's reflection served to banish this morbid idea as unjust to her friend. How could she tell that Lady Latimer was in any respect changed, or even cooled towards her? The estrangement, such as it was, had all been her own doing. “My very silence alone is an unfair reproach to her, and a treason to our former friendship. What right had I to suppose her other than sincere, in those kindly feelings she has so often expressed? There was nothing of brilliancy in my former state which could of itself have captivated her. Why should I imagine that my present forlorn condition, so calculated to excite sympathy, should produce on the contrary alienation, or estrangement?”

It was not so easy to act upon this conviction as to entertain it. Delay had very much aggravated the difficulties of explanation. How was it possible that she could now present herself to Lady Latimer's no-

tice, without giving some reason why she had not, at an earlier period of her distress, made that application which seemed to arise so naturally out of their former connexion? It would now be more than ever necessary to enter into painful details respecting her family, and to sacrifice the memory of her who was no more, or to submit to a suspicion as to her own motives in adopting her present doubtful mode of life, which could no otherwise be accounted for than by acknowledging that *somewhere* there existed cause for concealment. For a moment the thought crossed her mind that Lady Latimer never had known, and now never could know, her of whom she would have to speak; and that therefore no injury could be inflicted by confiding to her the truth. "But shall not I know of whom I am speaking; and even in hinting at her frailty, how could I bear to recall the fond expression of that mild blue eye that never looked reproach upon me?"

The result of her reflections was the determination to rise as early as possible the next morning, and to carry all her little productions to the bazaar the moment it was open. It was indeed early. The streets were still empty—the windows still closed. The doors were only just opened: and no spirits were stirring, except the Undines of the front steps, who were sporting their usual morning water-works. Many of them stopt for a time their twirling mops, whilst they followed Helen with a stare, in which admiration was blended with a certain difficulty in reconciling something in her air and appearance, with the disadvantageous moral construction, which naturally arose from their rarely seeing any one, at that early hour, at once good-looking, and looking good.

As Helen, in hurrying abruptly on, turned a corner, she almost ran against two gentlemen who were standing in earnest conversation, and in whom, to her no small dismay, she recognized Fitzalbert and Germain. Though she had passed them, before she was

aware of this, and at first she hoped unobserved by them, yet she soon became conscious she was followed, and she fancied known. She was somewhat reassured as to this last point, by hearing one say to the other, "A beautiful figure, by Jove!" in an audible whisper; just as they passed her. They then slackened their pace, and seemed determined that she should pass them again. She drew her veil closer and thicker over her face, and attempted to walk steadily by. She at first hoped and believed that they were no longer following, but soon again she heard them close behind, and talking in French to each other, evidently about her, though not so pointedly as to have been remarked by one ignorant of that language, which they no doubt supposed her to be. She could not bear the idea of being known, which she had no doubt would be the case, if she was traced to the bazaar; she therefore turned from it, sharp round a corner, in the direction of her own home, hurried her pace by degrees even to a run, and never looked behind till she reached her own door.

When she made this sharp turn, Germain held her other pursuer back by the arm, saying: "No, this will never do; it will be too marked; besides, I am sure you are mistaken, and that we are a real annoyance to her."

"Admirably acted, that's all: and indeed so successfully, that even *I* feel my curiosity excited. Time was that the glimpse of a well turned ankle, whether cased in silk or worsted, would have led me over half the stiles in the country; but one lives to learn, and experience has taught me this, that every woman who studiously conceals her face, has depend upon it, derived from Dame Nature, very sufficient reasons for so doing. However, she is the best goer I ever saw—that I will say for her. I have a great mind to try whether she'll last."

"Stop! it's past eight o'clock, and you're not exactly in a hunting dress for such a wild goose chase"

—pointing to his Almack's costume of the evening before, in which they had played all night.

“That's very true—so good night to you, and good morning to her.”

Helen meanwhile rushed up stairs to her own apartment, threw herself upon the sofa, crouching like a hunted hare; and whilst her heart beat violently ~~against~~ ^{her breast}, listened anxiously for the dreaded sounds of pursuit: and though a few minutes reassured her upon this point, in vain she attempted throughout the day to regain her accustomed composure.

CHAPTER IX.

Behold this ring,
Whose high respect, and rich validity,
Did lack a parallel.

SHAKESPEARE.—*All's Well that ends Well.*

You look upon that sleeve; behold it well.—
O, all you gods!—O pretty, pretty pledge!
Nay, do not snatch it from me;
He that takes this, must take my heart withal.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Troilus and Cressida.*

THE morning after Almack's, Lady Flamborough called rather early upon Lady Boreton, not from any great wish that she felt to see her ladyship, but from a prospective inclination to repeat her visit in the summer to Boreton Hall.

A dowager's summer and autumn are apt to hang a little heavy on her hands. A watering-place is rather an expensive resource; she can't bespeak plays and patronise balls for nothing, and, after all, she is often of the same opinion as the manager, or the master of the ceremonies, that "*La jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*" Then, as to a trip to the Continent, a pretty precocious girl may sometimes be married before the age at which she would be "out" in England. But neither Lady Caroline nor Lady Jane were quite so green as to require to be forced forward; and to lose a London season would be, in their case, a dangerous experiment. Lady Flamborough had been very much pleased with the party she last met at Boreton; and though nothing had actually occurred in consequence, much had then been put in

train. She had certainly some difficulty as to the adverse part that many of her connexions and relatives had since taken at the election; but she had been glad to observe, the night before, that Lady Boreton did not appear to retain any unpleasant feelings on this head. She was prepared too, this morning, to introduce a topic which might afford an opportunity of descanting on the pleasures of the visit, without recalling the troubles of the election. She therefore began:

"Who do you think is come to town this morning? Henry Seaford, my cousin, Lord Waltham's third son. You know, he was intended for the *diplomatique*; but, at nineteen, he wanted to marry a *figurante* at Naples, so his father very properly determined he should go into the church. And Lord Waltham certainly has been very kind to him ever since; and has just got him a capital living in a beautiful hunting county, and so he is come up from the place where he has been upon probation. And whom do you think he has been telling us about? You remember that girl, who was a sort of *protégée* of Louisa's, and whom you were kind enough to invite to that delightful party we had at Boreton? My girls always say, they never were so happy. You know who I mean; Miss ——. It was a strange fancy of Louisa's. I told her, I thought it was taking a great liberty with you: however, Fitzalbert cried her up, so every body admired her. Miss Melville was it?—No, Mordaunt."

"Miss Mordaunt, to be sure," said Lady Boreton; "A very pretty pleasant girl. What of her?"

"Why, Seaford says, she's left quite a beggar.—Her mother died when he first came there; and she's gone no one knows where. It's a great pity! To be sure, she had a very neat taste in dress, and might make a very good lady's maid; only, I can't bear pretty ladies' maids; they are always looking over one's shoulders at themselves in the glass."

It so happened, that Oakley just at this time came

in to make a morning visit to Lady Boreton. He was very much out of spirits, having seen that morning by his agent's accounts, that Helen's annuity had never been claimed. This had made him very uneasy; he determined himself to leave town to examine into the cause; and had therefore called on Lady Boreton previous to his departure, to arrange some county business with her, which it was impossible that he could leave unsettled. It will have been observed that, to use a vulgar phrase, there was "no love lost" between him and Lady Flamborough.

He was therefore rather disconcerted, at finding her there; and she, on her part, abruptly concluded her visit on account of his coming in; but, as it was impossible with her well-practised eye for incipient flirtations, that his former attentions to Helen Mordaunt could have entirely escaped her observation, she said rather maliciously, just as she went out: "Indeed, my dear Lady Boreton, any thing one could do to get her in a decent line, would be quite a charity for her, poor thing! It is shocking to think of the temptations to which she may be exposed; for she certainly was rather pretty. You had better talk it over with Mr. Oakley; he is a governor of so many of those charitable institutions. The Magdalen, is it? No; that is not exactly what I mean: however, I'll leave you to settle it all with him. Good morning."

When Lady Boreton explained to Oakley that it was Helen Mordaunt of whom they had been speaking, he turned as pale as death; and had her ladyship not been engrossed in many projects on which she had long wished to consult him, she could not have avoided observing his emotion. It was in vain, however, that she attempted to command his attention, whilst she expounded to him several joint-stock schemes, in which she was then anxiously engaged. "You must take a hundred shares in this, Mr. Oakley, it is the best of all. It is called the 'Joint Stock Staff of Life Company.' You know there is nothing in which

one is so shamefully abused as in the London bread. Well, we propose to bake in one immense oven, and the dough is to be kneaded by steam. Fitzalbert says, that if the dandies must go into the city for money, they had better give up fishmonger's companies, and go into the *best bread* society, where they will be very much *kneaded*. "Very good that, Mr. Oakley."

But even this appeal did not force from Oakley an unconscious smile at Fitzalbert's execrable pun, much less rouse him from his abstraction; though he rose mechanically, at Lady Boreton's desire, to examine the model of the oven. In showing it off, Lady Boreton's wrist got entangled in the machinery, and her bracelet broke and fell to the ground. Oakley stooped to pick it up, hardly knowing what he was doing, till his eye accidentally glancing upon that which he held in his hand, his attention instantly became riveted, whilst Lady Boreton went on indefatigably explaining that at which he was no longer pretending to look. The bracelet was made of hair, and irresistibly reminded him of one he had seen Helen Mor-daunt, at Boreton, making of her own hair for Lady Latimer: it had been of a peculiarly ingenious manufacture, lately invented at Paris, and had not been previously known in this country; he remembered too being struck, at the time, with the admiration the company then bestowed on the workmanship; and not a little disgusted at the frivolity which could single out this, of all Helen's accomplishments, the most to admire.

That which he now held in his hand, was of the same fashion, the same plaiting; and could he have believed it, he would almost have said, the same hair.

Lady Boreton, having finished her unheeded lecture on machinery, offered to take the bracelet away. "Oh, thank you, Mr. Oakley, the clasp is broken, I perceive. Bazaar goods never last."

But Oakley was unwilling thus to part with it, and

offered himself to take it there to be repaired; thinking that, by that means, he might perhaps obtain a clue to the discovery of Helen.

Lady Boreton looked not a little surprised at such an offer on his part, as it was a civility quite out of his usual line; but she nevertheless accepted his services.

Oakley hastened out of the house, went direct to the bazaar, and found out the stall mentioned by Lady Boreton; but, once there, he almost omitted his commission, and entirely forgot the explicit direction he had received as to the new setting, in the eagerness of his inquiries about the person from whom it had been procured. The shopwoman, having still some pretensions to good looks herself, gave not an over partial account of the personal appearance of her, the mere description of whom seemed to blind her hearer to the more obvious charms before him; but even from her account, Oakley extracted enough to convince him that it was Helen herself.

"You will oblige me with her direction," said he. There was a strange expressson, which was meant for propriety, on the shopwoman's countenance, as she replied, "that indeed she knew nothing at all about her—that her goods were brought there for sale, and she paid honestly for them; but, as to any thing further than in the way of business, she knew nothing about her, nor she didn't desire."

"But I have to order another bracelet similar to this," said Oakley, restraining himself: "when are you likely to see her again, as there is some hurry about it?"

"Oh, if it's for that, sir," said the woman, "I expected her here this morning; but I'm afraid she may have been a bit idle. Perhaps some other gentleman has been asking after her," added she, meaning to look sly; but she checked herself, on seeing nothing in Oakley's face which made it, on any account, expedient for her to do so.

"I think it is impossible that she should miss coming to-morrow morning; and she's very early when she does come."

Having, at length, extracted this piece of information, Oakley departed; and the shopwoman muttered, as he went out: "I should have guessed as much; it is always your demure-looking ones who are the worst."

CHAPTER X.

You remember
 The daughter of this lord?
 Admiringly; my high-repented blames,
 Dear sovereign, pardon to me.
 All is whole;
 Not one word more of the consumed time.
 Let's take the instant by the forward top,
 For on our quick'st decrees
 The inaudible and noiseless foot of time
 Steals ere we can effect them.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE succeeding night Oakley passed in the House of Commons, and was surprised to find it impossible to fix his attention, as usual, to the course of a long and interesting debate. Returning from thence after day-break, he took his station at once where he could command from a distance the entrance to the bazaar. He had, as might have been expected from the earliness of the hour, some time to wait: but at length he beheld a figure in black slowly, almost timidly, advancing: a single glance sufficed to convince him it was the object of his search. There was a hesitation in her step, and an embarrassment in her deportment, caused by the narrow escape of being recognised, experienced by her the day before, which seemed to call for support and assistance; and, but that he felt unequal to command his feelings sufficiently for a meeting in the open streets, he would have rushed forward to offer her his protection. As she returned from the bazaar, he followed at a distance, and traced her to her lodging, but hesitated to enter after her.

Helen's situation was now more than ever distressing. The day before she had received, through a relation of old Dorothy's in the city, where, to prevent discovery, all her letters were sent, a communication from Mr. Seaford, to state, that having been promoted to a better living, he was obliged to give up her house, the last quarter for which, paid in advance, was just out. This rendered it almost indispensable for her to give up her present expensive lodging; but old Dorothy's state, crippled and helpless with rheumatism, seemed to make the proposal of it for the present impossible: as even, had she been in health, she was sure it was a point that would not have been carried without a contest. Independent of the regard which long habit had made her feel for the old woman, her protection was too necessary to the respectability of her present situation to be lightly dispensed with. The shopwoman, too, not having found the novelty of her last batch of fancy articles so attractive as she had expected, had made a favour of taking even those she had just finished, and had confined any further orders to another bracelet similar to the broken one which she said had been ordered by the gentleman who brought the lady's to be repaired.

This bracelet, purchased by Lady Boreton at the bazaar, had been a single experiment of the kind, and tempted by Helen in her endeavour to produce something new; and doubtful of success, she had sacrificed a lock of her own hair to see whether it would answer. What was now to be done? At first she thought of purchasing some hair as nearly as possible of the same colour as her own, of which to make it; little guessing that such a substitute would have made all the difference to the person by whom it was ordered. Then again, the expense of such a purchase was such as the present state of her funds could ill afford; and she determined to sacrifice some more of her own beautiful locks.

As she loosed her long and luxuriant hair of

matchless brown, a passing feeling of pardonable vanity interposed to check her hand, but she had almost subdued it with the reflection, "Is this a time for pride of person?"—when at the moment the door opened, and Oakley once again stood before her, unexpected and unushered.

Far different, however, was the first impression made upon him by Helen's appearance now and upon the last occasion, when that fine hair, which now flowed unconfined, about to be sacrificed to her necessities, had dressed with consummate art, been to him offensively blended, with his adversary's colours. Now the splendid robe of gala gaiety had been exchanged for a simple dress of the deepest mourning.

It is said, that few are seen for the first time in mourning without their beauty being apparently enhanced, and of this few Helen was not one. Confinement and suffering had somewhat blanched her cheek, but the more depressed and humiliated she appeared, the more unworthy did Oakley think himself of her; and this feeling for the time overpowered him. Helen, on her part, was for an instant kept silent by a mixture of sensations which she would have been unable to analyse, and unwilling at all to attribute to their true source. This it was that at first imparted a tremulousness to her voice as she said: "I am sure you need only be told, that this room is mine, and recollect that I am alone and unprotected, to see at once the impropriety of this intrusion.

"Forgive me one moment, and I will explain—but to see you thus degraded—in a situation so unworthy of you—"

"Degraded," said she, "I can never feel but by some fault of my own; and however at variance my present situation may be with that in which you last beheld me, it was then, not now, that I was misplaced. For none can know better than you, that a forlorn and destitute orphan, with no kindred claims of any kind, can best by her own exertions escape reproach,

"And it is my brutality," exclaimed Oakley, "which has made you think so but too justly. — You must hate me!"

"No indeed," said she, "such an idea is unjust, alike to all your former kindness, and to my grateful sense if it. Neither of these is to be effaced by an injury inflicted in a momentary burst of passion."

As she said this, even these kind words failed of imparting that consolation to Oakley which he derived from an object which accidentally met his eye. Strange, and trivial, and apparently unworthy of observation, at such a moment, was that from whence he nevertheless, imbibed comfort.

A volume of Byron's works was open upon the table before him. Byron was a genius peculiarly suited to excite admiration in a person of Oakley's disposition. He well remembered, during the days of his acquaintance with Helen, that he had often repeated passages to her of that author, with whom she was then unacquainted, as Mrs. Mordaunt's secluded mode of life had confined her reading principally to the standard classics of the language, in all of which she was perfectly well read. "Even, then, in her present embarrassments, she has remembered my recommendations, and cultivated my tastes," thought he; "this is not the conduct of indifference or dislike." So ingenious is a lover in extracting encouragement from apparently the most unlikely sources! As soon, therefore, as she had finished, he addressed her with somewhat more of confidence: "Talk not of my services; they are nothing; but let me hope —"

"Pardon me," said Helen, interrupting him; "I have said that I did not consider my present situation degrading; but I am not insensible to its peculiar disadvantages; not the least of which is, that it lays me painfully open to groundless suspicion. My character must remain unblemished: 'tis all I have; and the continuance of this interview —"

"I see it," said Oakley. "No I will not again

aggravate your misfortunes; but say, at least, that you forgive me.

"That I do, as freely as would that Christian spirit to whom the injury was done. Had she even known your recent offence, she would still have died as she did—almost her last breath murmuring a blessing on your name. Her end was that of a person whose former errors, such as they were; had, by separating her from this world, the better prepared her for the next. And that I, her daughter, who so revered and adored her, should be obliged to consider her.—But this is a subject on which I cannot bear to think; much less to speak. As far as you were to blame; most heartily do I forgive you. God bless you, Mr. Oakley.

"I cannot leave you, even till a better opportunity of saying all I wish, unless you will allow me again to restore what I consider as your legal provision."

"Do not ask this. I cannot quite forget as well as forgive, if I have that constantly to remind me; and I would fain learn to think of you with unmixed gratitude for all your kindness to the orphan girl. Any other proof of my forgiveness —"

"There is one proof which I would yet dare not ask. Oh, Helen! might I but hope that you would allow me, by devoting my life to your happiness, to ensure my own—that you would, as mine, consent to share with me that situation in the world which should be yours by right! I hardly know what I am saying; but this I know, that I cannot live without you. Helen, for God's sake, look up—speak to me."

When Oakley's meaning first broke on Helen's mind, the flash of excitement, even before the words were uttered, dispelled all traces of languor and suffering from her previously pale cheek. Her eye, for an instant, glistened with a peculiar brightness till dimmed with tears; when, hiding her face in her hands, and dropping it on the table, she sobbed hysterically. The sudden revulsion had been too much

for her shattered spirits. While Oakley hung anxiously over her, she had time to recover from this involuntary weakness, which she soon did so far as to say: "No, no, no: I feel that this cannot, must not be."

"Why? wherefore?" exclaimed Oakley, passionately: "who can dare to object, if you allow me to hope?"

"No," said Helen; it is a connexion every way unworthy of you; and I cannot allow that your generous nature, excited by the idea of injury inflicted, and softened by pity, should give to a passing predilection, an influence upon your fate which in cooler moments, your judgment would regret."

"Believe me, Helen, you now wrong me for the first time."

"Let me intreat you to hear me," said she; "I have hardly powers for my task, even if I may attempt it without interruption. If I have you to contend against as well as myself, it will be impossible. I will not deny that in the day-dreams of my solitude, the thought of this has often occurred; but I have convinced myself of its impossibility."

Oakley was again about to protest against such a conclusion, but the imploring look with which she met his attempt silenced him, and he listened with breathless attention, whilst she continued:—

"That your character has been no uninteresting one to me, I fear my recent weakness has but too plainly shown; but the more I have thought, (and I have had leisure for reflection,) the more convinced I have become, that yours is a disposition which would be rendered peculiarly unhappy by an unequal match."

"But how unequal, except that I am every way unworthy of you?"

"Nay, is not my present situation open to misconception and reproach? You, yourself, called it degradation; and though my own feelings would not so acknowledge it, yet I cannot deny that it will be so considered in the eyes of the world."

"But there is not a man living that feels more con-

tempt than I do for the opinion of that knot of knaves and fools which calls itself the world."

"That it would not force you to bow before its worthless idol, I can well believe; but prone as your nature is to distrust, even of yourself, how can you answer that you could be proof against the galling, though groundless taunts of the malicious?"

"But how can this affect you?"

"Simply thus; for I will not remind you that you cannot always command yourself. Your regret for what once passed, is too sincere for that to be necessary; but, for your happiness, it behoved you to have chosen one already known and acknowledged by the world; and, must I add, one of unblemished birth?"

Her voice faltered a little as she said this; but she continued: "My present line of life is one that I have adopted from the purest motives, and as the only way to extricate myself from difficulties; but my reasons were of a nature which evaded explanation. How, then, could you bear the thousand misinterpretations to which, should it be known, it may expose me? Nay, are you even sure that you could always steel your *own mind* against suspicion?"

As Helen uttered these words, Oakley's brow became suddenly clouded, whilst hideous visions, like the confused creations of the nightmare, crowded past him. But with an effort he succeeded in banishing them; and answered emphatically: "Suspect you, Helen? No, by Heaven, impossible!"

Having once allowed her to finish all her objections, he became more earnest in his intreaties and protestations. It was not to be expected that she should long resist herself as well as him. She had thought it her duty to state why she feared for his happiness. Having done this, I hope that the reader will not like her the less for having been too much of a woman, and too little of a heroine to attempt more. Indeed, she could not help flattering herself, from the proof of unbounded confidence he had just given, that her influence over him would be such as to overcome his con-

stitutional failing. Upon one point, however, she was resolute: that, till the expiration of her mourning, they should meet no more. Nothing should be declared, nor ought it to be considered by him in the light of an engagement.

"The home of my childhood being at present vacant, I will return there; and shall now have no scruple in again accepting that which we used to receive from my —— from the person whose property you have inherited."

As she said this, a noise as of one moving with difficulty, accompanied with much groaning and coughing, was heard in the next room. This was caused by Dorothy's efforts to raise herself in consequence of hearing a man's voice. At length, in answer to her repeated calls upon her name, Helen opened the door, whereupon the old woman, seeing Oakley and Helen, screamed out—"A man in Miss Mordaunt's room! I ought to have known it would come to this, though I could never have believed it of her."

"This gentleman," said Helen calmly, "is Mr. Oakley, Lord Rockington's heir."

"So much the worse; he comes of a bad sort, and I doubt for a bad end."

"You need not have feared suspicion," said Oakley to Helen, smiling; "such a duenna would have been a sufficient antidote to the doubts even of a Spaniard: but I think her faithful apprehensions merit confidence; and that she at least should be an exception to the silence on the subject of our engagement which you prescribe."

To this Helen consented, and Dorothy was quite satisfied upon hearing that at the expiration of the mourning, she was to resign her anxious care of her young mistress into the hands of a husband, in the person of Mr. Oakley.

As soon as Helen was deprived of the delight of Oakley's presence, was relieved from the torrent of Dorothy's questions, and had reason to reflect on the change in her future fate, which the last two hours

had produced, she indulged fondly in unmixed anticipations of happiness. The doubts of Oakley's disposition, which had been formed in the sadness of solitude, and which she thought it her duty to state, had lost their influence when she had ceased to urge them; and she now rather reproached herself with coldness and ingratitude in having so distrustfully received the passionate declaration of the most disinterested attachment.

CHAPTER XI.

————— This thou tell'st me;
But saying thus, instead of oil and balm,
Thou lay'st in every gash that love hath given me,
The knife that made it.

SHAKESPEARE.

"Don't you think Lady Jane Sydenham a most delightful girl?" said Germain to Fitzalbert, as they were breakfasting together at the house of the former.

"You do—which is more to the purpose," answered Fitzalbert. "Did I not always say it would be so? I shall set up for a prophet; for did I not also foresee that you would first fancy Lady Latimer?—but that wouldn't do. No, no; she had too much to lose, and like many of our fair countrywomen, however fond of flirting, she was not likely to run any such risk *pour vos beaux yeux*."

"I think," said Germain, recollecting what had been said at Boreton, "Lady Latimer rather wants heart."

"Well, nobody can accuse you of that except when it's in *hand*, as they say of a newspaper. However, I'm very glad that it's likely to be so. You and the Latimers will make a snug coterie together. It will be the very thing for me. I only hope that ass Greenford won't marry Lady Caroline—that would be too great luck for Lady Flamborough; besides, Sir Gregory is not exactly the sort of fellow one would present with the fee-simple of one's society. I let him out my acquaintance on short leases—and he sometimes pays heavy fines for renewal," he added, half to himself, as he walked towards the window,

doubting whether it was prudent to acknowledge so much.

Any further confidence of this kind, even if he had been imprudent enough to hint them, were prevented by the entrance of Oakley. Since his reconciliation with Helen, he had begun to think that he had never been sufficiently indulgent to the natural defects in the character of his early friend, who, on his part, had always been very patient under the much more annoying faults to which Oakley himself was subject. He had met Germain, accidentally, the day before, and the first advances he had then made to a reconciliation, had been at once received with that cordiality which Germain's good-natured and placable disposition would have led one to expect. Oakley had felt much happier since this interview had taken place; and his present visit was intended, not only as a further peace-offering, but as an advance towards renewed intimacy.

This amiable temper of mind was a little ruffled by finding Fitzalbert there. It is impossible to conceive any two men who had a more thorough dislike of each other. Fitzalbert, to be sure on his side, was a peccurante in every thing, and scarcely troubled his head about Oakley, when he was not, as he called it, oppressed with his presence; but it was observed that when that was the case, his jokes flowed less naturally, and there was more sharpness, and less ease in his conversation. Oakley had a thorough contempt for the character of Fitzalbert, joined to a certain dread of his satire, which did not the less exist, because he would never have acknowledged it, even to himself.

Fitzalbert prepared to evacuate upon this irruption of his enemy. "Then you are not for tennis this morning, eh, Germain?" said he. A strange idea, at the instant, occurred to him, and he afterwards said that he could not account by what chain of thought it first struck his fancy. "By the by," he added, "do you remember that devilish fine girl we gave chase to yesterday morning—I always thought I had seen her

before. Who do you think I really believe it was? You remember Helen Mordaunt, who used to live with Lady Latimer. It was stupid of me not to know her at once. There is no mistaking that air and figure when once seen. The light springy walk too!—Nobody knew what had become of her. I always heard she was of a low family. Who knows but she may be very come-at-able?"

This was said carelessly, and with no other object than to annoy Oakley; and with the view of watching its effect, he advanced towards the mirror over the chimney-piece, and whilst still speaking, and apparently examining Germain's dinner engagements,—which stuck round the frame, he stole a glance in the glass. But the impending storm which he saw on Oakley's brow, was so much more formidable and threatening than he had expected, that his retreat was like that of a man who has no objection to admire a tempest from a distance, but is not prepared unnecessarily to expose himself to its violence. He therefore wished Germain an abrupt good morning; at the same time, however, whistling "*Di tanti palpiti*," with the most successful precision.

He had descended the stairs, and finished the tune, before Oakley had recovered from his astonishment, or had decided in what way he could most successfully annihilate him. He then seized Germain's hand with appalling earnestness, saying, "Tell me, for God's sake, what is this frightful story that puppy has been alluding to? Helen Mordaunt, and Fitzalbert,—what can they possibly have in common? Did he follow her?—did they speak?"

Germain, not having been informed of Oakley's engagement to Helen, was, on his side surprised at his vehemence, but readily explained that on the previous morning he had been dragged on by Fitzalbert, in pursuit of a woman, whose figure had struck him, but it had never for an instant occurred to him, that it could be Miss Mordaunt, and his ignorance, as to whether it was or was not, was a sufficient answer to

the other question, whether there had been any communication between them.

"True! true!" said Oakley; "what a fool I am to mind the idle insinuations of a coxcomb like that! Still he certainly used to be very attentive to her at Boreton."

"You have not told me," said Germain, "whether you have any particular reason for wishing to find her out, but if you have, now that Fitzalbert has mentioned the likeness, I have no doubt that it was she we saw yesterday morning, and her anxiety to avoid us, confirms me in the idea."

"Yes, I believe, so far the conceited fool was right; but I may as well confide to you at once my precious secret; for, to say the truth, I shall never be quite happy till Helen is again safe under your friend, Lady Latimer's protection; and you must arrange this."

This proposal, on the part of Oakley, to re-unite Helen with Lady Latimer, was principally intended to show the extent of his repentance for his offence on the memorable night of the quarrel, which had originated in his wanton attack on that lady's character; but though he was hardly aware of it himself, this good intention was not a little accelerated in action, by an anxious uneasiness at what Helen might be exposed to, in her present unprotected situation. He communicated, without alluding to their quarrel, his discovery of Helen, her distress, since the death of her mother, and their present engagement. Whilst Germain rejoiced in the happiness of his friend, he began seriously to turn over in his mind the intention of being equally happy with Lady Jane.

"And now," said Oakley, "one word upon the credit of our old friendship. Public report spreads too widely to be entirely without foundation, that you are dreadfully embarrassed. I once told you, that whatever ready money I could command, and that is not a little, should be at your service; and you

have not so entirely forgotten me, as to think that I ever made an offer which I did not mean should be accepted."

"A thousand thanks!" replied Germain, not a little touched at this revival of former kindness, "but at present, I am in no want; for next week, when Lord Latimer's colt wins the Derby, I shall sack twenty thousand."

"Or lose —?" inquired Oakley, shaking his head.

"Oh! nothing to signify; and besides, he can't lose. I know all about him."

"Well, we shall see; or rather, you will see and I shall hear—for nothing should tempt me there."

When Oakley, having left Germain, returned homewards, he in vain attempted to banish from his recollection the offensive tone in which Fitzalbert had mentioned Helen. He tried to persuade himself that, even if it was done purposely to annoy him, circumstanced as he was, it was impossible openly to resent it, and therefore to allow him to succeed in his object, was giving an unnecessary triumph to his enemy.

Yet, in spite of these suggestions of his better reason, he could not get over the disagreeable impression it had left behind—he could not endure that Fitzalbert should ever have presumed to look at Helen for a moment even in passing, with that feeling, which he had dared to avow had induced him to follow her in the open streets. The intolerably confident expression of countenance with which he had pronounced her *come-at-able*, was ever obtruding itself on his recollection, and rankling at his heart.—Was it to be borne, that he should always be subject without redress, to similar insults? If the last were repeated in its recent shape, he felt resolved, that not even his desire to put off the declaration of his engagement till Helen was creditably settled, should prevent his inflicting summary punishment on the spot.

But this was not all he had to fear, when even the announcement of his intended marriage should secure him from the repetition of such conversation in his hearing. He dreaded lest Fitzalbert, having once ascertained that he was right, in supposing that it was Helen whom he had seen in such a doubtful situation, should take a thousand circuitous ways of hinting disadvantageous constructions upon her conduct, the effect of which might meet his eye, without reaching his ear; and that being unable to trace this home to him on whom his suspicions rested, or to make Fitzalbert answerable for the contemptuous curl upon another man's lip, he should be left entirely without redress. There was much of morbid feeling in all this; but it was in Oakley's nature for such things to give him uneasiness; and after torturing himself in vain, the only practical, though not rational conclusion at which he arrived, was to take the first opportunity of fastening a quarrel upon Fitzalbert.

Meanwhile, Germain gave himself up without alloy to agreeable anticipations. That Lord Latimer's horse should win the Derby, he looked upon to be as certain as that Lady Jane would accept him. There had certainly not been much romance in the attachment of the two; but there was much that was just as likely to tend to their mutual happiness. There was a buoyancy in Germain's spirits, which it seemed to be impossible for circumstances to depress. There was a sunshine in his mind, which imparted a glowing light to all that it touched, which was peculiarly attractive to a girl of Lady Jane's cheerful, but not thoughtless turn. Her natural good sense certainly led her to perceive that Germain's facility of temper caused him to be much too easily led, but at the same time she saw that he was most in the power of those with whom he lived the most, and this conviction was rather consolatory as to the advantages a wife might derive from that circumstance.

Certain it is, that though Lady Flamborough still manœuvred as if there were difficulties to be overcome, yet she experienced as little real unwillingness, as she showed open opposition to the arrangement—that while she, Caroline, and two others, went inside the carriage, Jane and Germain should share the barouche-box down to Epsom.

CHAPTER XII.

Look, what a horse should have he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back.

What recketh he his rider's angry stir?
What cares he now for curb, or pricking spur?
SHAKESPEARE.

"WE could not make a House: it is the day of the Derby," said a treasury-hack to Oakley, as he met him in Parliament Street. And that is not the only house by many thousands that is on that day deserted. Private, as well as public concerns give way to the all-engrossing excitement of the moment; though there are many who do not know, and still more who do not care what "the Derby" means, whether it is a wild beast, a giant, a house, or a horse. There never was any expedition on which every one of the hundred thousand goes so entirely, because the other 99999 do so. To be sure, whatever other advantages they may derive from it, all have that of receiving in full the "price of a king's ransom, a peck of March dust," which, our climate being apt to be in arrear, is usually paid at two months after date, and is just due about this time, with its usual accompaniments of a hot sun and a cold wind.

Upon this occasion, however, the weather was more than usually propitious, and as for Lady Flam-borough—no bustle bewildered, no dust blinded, no sun dazzled her watchful eyes, as she marked the proceedings on the barouche-box. She thought she could not be deceived, for there was a more than usual ani-

mation in Germain's profile; and ~~there~~ was a peculiar tinge on the little she could catch of Jane's delicate cheek, as it was turned away from him.

She was right; the proposal had been made, and accepted. It may be objected to Germain's discretion, that he chose rather a public opportunity for his declaration; but his is no singular case. Secluded woodbine bowers are not to be found from March to August; and less favourable moments have sometimes sufficed; and though it was by no means a sentimental journey on which they were bound, yet in their present position, they might at least be said to be elevated above the rest of the world.

Arrived at the course, the business of the morning obliged Germain, even after what had just passed between him and Lady Jane, to leave her, to attend to his own immediate interests. Upon entering the paddock where the horses were parading, it was easy for him to distinguish Lord Latimer's, from the crowd which surrounded him, and moved across to meet him again, as he walked round. He was indeed a noble animal; but from the enthusiastic encomiums passed upon him, one would have imagined that his like had never been foaled. "Capital legs!" cried one; "how well he steps!"—and another, "What thighs and houghs?"—"Depth in the girth!"—"Never saw such a shoulder!"—"And such a pretty blood-like head too!" All these agreeably greeted Germain's ear, as he mingled with the crowd.

"And what's that washy looking animal with a white tail?" asked Lord Latimer.

"Mr. Snooks's chestnut colt, by Woeful."

"What will any body take about Snooks?" said Germain.

"I'll take forty to one," said Snooks himself, who was watching his horse.

"I'll bet you twenty thousand to five hundred," said Germain. "I can't hear of Snooks's winning the Derby:" he added, aside to Lord Latimer.

The bell now rung for saddling, and Germain pre-

pared to return to Lady Jane; but in the anxious confusion of the moment, and amid the labyrinth of carriages which had collected since he left her, this was no easy task. As he was endeavouring to guess his way through, he was suddenly brought to by a whole carriage-full of the Misses Luton. "Oh, Mr. Germain, do just stop and tell us all about it: we were never here before. Does Lord Latimer ride himself?—and who do you think will win?"—"I hope pink will; it will be so pretty to see it before the rest."—"I wish you would make us a lottery; but you mus'nt win it yourself."

Whilst Germain, suffering under this untimely infliction, was good-humouredly complying, Lord Latimer came galloping up, his face as white as a sheet, and seizing hold of Germain's arm, so as to make him drop all the Misses Luton's lottery-tickets, whispered in his ear, "He canters, quite short; he is dead lame!"

Germain, muttering an unintelligible apology to the young ladies, spurred his horse after him, and was soon in the centre of the betting ring, endeavouring to hedge some of his money; but it was too late. If there had previously been any doubt, the anxious face with which he offered to bet against the horse, would have prevented any odds being taken about him, and from first favourite, he was soon at a hundred to one.

Germain was obliged to submit to his fate, and patiently await the result. He attempted to console himself with thinking that the horse upon inspection did not seem so lame, and hoping that he might not run much the worse. He waited near the top of the hill to see them pass. Lord Latimer's was well in front; and the jockey seemed comfortable about him. As Germain scampered across in a fearful crowd of stumbling horses and tumbling riders, he could not keep his eye constantly fixed upon the race, but at the last corner, Lord Latimer's yellow jacket was decidedly leading, and the space between him and the

others appeared increasing. Still, as he looked again, that gap between him and the rest was occupied by a single horse, rode in pink. He could not recollect whose colour that was. At this time a man without hat or wig, and holding tight by the mane, crossed Germain's path, just grazed against him in passing, and dropped off his horse. This interrupted his view for an instant; when he looked again, the pink jacket had decidedly gained upon the yellow.

He had now reached the brow of the middle hill, and pulling up his horse, could see more distinctly: they were neck and neck. The struggle was tremendous, from the distance to the winning post. He fancied he could sometimes see a line of pink behind the yellow jacket which was nearest to him; sometimes he feared that a pink stripe appeared in front. Undistinguishably linked together they both vanished behind the crowd, and he was left in uncertainty.

He hastened down the hill, to learn the result: and his ready ear caught the name of Lord Latimer rising above the other murmurs of the multitude. He passed close to Lady Jane; she actually trembled with anxiety, but her countenance lighted up brilliantly, as a gentleman passing at the time said, "Lord Latimer, I should think."

Germain got nearer: "Lord Latimer, I believe," cried a second.

He advanced, and met Fitzalbert returning. He just gasped out, "Who's won?"

"Snooks, by a head."

"Who told you so?"

"The judge."

And all doubt was at an end!

Fitzalbert having cantered on, Germain was again left to his own thoughts. He was at first quite bewildered at the extent of the unlooked-for disappointment. With his usual sanguine turn, he had always looked upon Lord Latimer's winning the Derby as next to a certainty; and had actually calculated upon the money he was thus to win, as part of his availa-

ble resources. For some time, therefore, he did not call to mind the extent of his misfortune; but of this he was soon to be reminded in no agreeable manner. He slowly turned his horse towards the hill, and with a parched mouth, aching head, burning cheek, and shivering back, prepared to look as if he did not care at all about it.

When he had just maganimously made up his mind to the effort, his resolution was called into play, by hearing, "Mr. Germain! Mr. Germain!" repeated by a voice which, such was the present confusion in his head, he did not at first recollect, till looking up, he beheld Mrs. Wilcox and some others in a gorgeous carriage, which had been built upon her marriage.

Though the lady was actively engaged in tearing asunder the leg of a cold turkey, she found leisure to address Germain: "What a delightful jaunt it is! You were quite right, Mr. Germain, when you used to tell me of the pleasure of a trip to Epsom; but you don't know you must wish me joy about the race. Mr. Snooks is my Wilcox's first cousin, and he has let me win twenty pounds with him. Would you believe it, Mr. Germain, some foolish person betted him twenty thousand to—I don't know how little—just before the race?"

This painfully recalled to Germain's recollection who that foolish person had been, and added not a little to his difficulties; but Fanny heeded not the effect of what she said.

"Only think—we were just as near losing poor Mr. Snooks as he was near losing the race. Some awkward fellow ran plump up against him, and knocked him off his horse. I hope you don't feel much shook, sir?" she added, turning to a figure who was leaning back in the carriage, his head wrapped in a pocket-handkerchief, whom Germain had no difficulty in recognising at the same time for the clumsy cavalier whom he had unhorsed, as well as

for the individual with whom he had made the unlucky bet.

This was too much for indurance, and wishing the party as much joy as he could spare, he rode in quest of his own friends. Lady Flamborough he found also engaged in the interesting occupation of luncheon, though in somewhat less ravenous a scramble than Wilcox and Co. Lady Jane he could easily perceive looked uneasy and distressed; and she took the first opportunity of saying to him, in an undertone; "You have lost—*much* I'm afraid."

"Dreadfully," he muttered in reply.

"Well, never mind," said she. "I care not, but—" she added in an earnest manner, "pray make light of it to mamma, if she mentions the subject. You have no idea of the mischief it may do."

"I ought not to deceive her, nor indeed you. I cannot yet recollect the extent of my ruin."

"You will not be obliged, I trust to sell your estates; and for temporary embarrassment, however great, those who have known you best have long been prepared."

"Indeed, 'tis very true! But how should you have known it?—not from Lady Flamborough?"

"No; she would not have believed it even if she had heard it. No matter how I learned it: but it is as well," added she, faintly smiling, "that it should not now have come upon me by surprise, and that you should know it was not ignorance of this that I allowed you this morning to put your own construction upon my silence."

"You are too good, too considerate, to recollect at such a moment how much I stood in need of such a consolation;" and he was proceeding with more vehemence than the opportunity permitted, though not than the occasion warranted, to protest the warmth of his attachment, when interrupted by Fitzalbert, who, having sought out the carriage in pursuit of some wine and water, cried out: "Is that Germain? By

the by, Germain, how came you and Latimer to make such a mistake as to back such a beast as that colt of his? I never saw such a rip in my life. He has no fore-legs, and his action is dead slow—any one might have seen that.”

At any other moment Germain would have been rather amused at the different opinion given of the same animal before and after the race; but being now completely jaded and dispirited, he had not a repartee left in him, and instantly attended to Lady Flam-borough's desire to find the horses and prepare for their return to London.

CHAPTER XIII.

Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart!
My dearest lord, blest, to be most accursed,
Rich, only to be wretched;—thy great fortunes
Are made thy chief afflictions. Alas, kind lord!
He's flung in rage from this ungrateful seat
Of monstrous friends; nor has he with him to
Supply his life, or that which can command it.
I'll follow and inquire him out;
And ever serve his mind with my best will.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY JANE had no opportunity in the course of that evening of explaining to her mother the interesting communication that had passed between her and Germain upon the barouche-box, and the next morning at breakfast Lady Flamborough took the subject into her own hands, saying: "I really think Mr. Starling a very agreeable man, with a very proper horror of gambling. I have asked him to dinner to-day; and I hope, Jane, that you will be prepared to treat him more civilly than you are in the habit of doing. I could hardly believe at first all he told me last night about Mr. Germain, but every one I asked since has confirmed it. He is, I should think, irretrievably ruined. He has, it appears, been dreadfully involved all this year, and his last losses will make his former creditors clamorous. I can't help thinking how lucky it is that you always showed a proper unwillingness to encourage his attentions. I own in that you were more clear-sighted than I was myself, and I applaud your prudence."

"Your praise, my dear mamma, you will be sorry to hear, is singularly ill-timed:" and she then proceeded to detail the proposal and acceptance of the morning before; for which, however, Lady Flamborough was well prepared, though she had thought it expedient to affect ignorance.

"Singularly indiscreet, indeed, you foolish girl! but of course it was all conditional—to depend upon my approbation—and to be at once at an end if I withheld my consent."

"There was no such stipulation. You had never given me to understand that there could be any doubt about that which seemed to you the first object in life."

"But I tell you, he is a ruined man—won't have it in his power to make a settlement for years; and if he was to marry now, he would have a grown-up family, while his estate was still at nurse. Your own opinion, I am sure, my dear Jane, must be altered by what you now hear, which of course you could never have expected."

"Excuse me; it so happened that in a round-about way, through an old servant, I was perfectly aware that Mr. Germain was an embarrassed man, and therefore was perfectly prepared for what has happened, when I accepted him."

Lady Flamborough looked at her daughter for a moment, perfectly puzzled, and endeavouring to find out whether she could be in earnest.

"Well; you are the strangest child I ever knew: this must be mere contradiction; and that you should prefer such a shatterbrained spendthrift to Mr. Starling, who is just as agreeable a companion, and of whom all the world speaks well——"

"You must be aware, my dear mamma, that even if I were disposed to agree with all the world, the time is past when there could be any use in discussing their comparative merits."

"I don't know that; you can't mean to consider this engagement any longer binding?"

"But indeed I do. I should as soon consider a change in worldly circumstances as a reason for deserting my duty if actually married, as for forfeiting my word when once pledged."

"Well, I see there is no use in arguing with you at present: in a little time you will think better of these things; but let me remind you, that there is no use either in being rude to Mr. Starling, or in proclaiming an engagement to which I will never consent."

"It is not a subject that I am likely to mention, unless questioned by some one that has a right to do so, particularly as I must of course wait patiently for your consent; but as to not being rude to Mr. Starling, if you mean by that, leading him to understand that his attentions are welcome, that is what I never did, and am not likely now to begin."

"Upon my word, Jane, your conduct to me is worse than Louisa's ever was; for she never would have thought of making such a connexion as this." But this was a quarter from which also Lady Flamborough was shortly to experience unexpected mortification.

Lady Latimer's fête at the beginning of June was one to which the world of fashion had for several days looked forward with expectations of unrivalled pleasure. Nor were they disappointed—every body was there who ought to have been present, and no one who ought not. The house was one of the best in London, and the lovely Mistress of the Revels never looked more beautiful, or seemed more happy. At last, even the favoured few who had remained there to talk over those who had not that privilege, had departed, and Lady Latimer, being left quite alone, remembered, for the first time that his lordship had not been there all the evening. There had been, it is true, a House of Lords that night; but this was an hour quite beyond peerage constitutions. Upon inquiry, she found that Lord Latimer had been some time at home, and had retired to his study below. Not a little inclined to reproach him for his neglect,

she hurried through the brilliant wilderness, where countless candles shone but upon senseless hangings, and pushing open his study door, found Lord Latimer sitting by the light from a single flat candlestick, crunching a biscuit, sipping wine and water, and surrounded by papers, of which the shape was too long, and the handwriting too round, for any one to suppose them of an agreeable nature.

Lady Latimer, hardly observing how he was occupied, cried out: "Latimer, you stupid man! you have no idea what you have lost. It was much the most perfect thing of the season. Fitzalbert positively insists upon my giving another."

"Then, I presume, Fitzalbert positively means to pay for it."

"What do you mean—are you dreaming?"

"Sit down, Louisa, I have much that I can no longer avoid telling you. I am a very bad hand though, even at talking business, much more at managing it; but the short of the matter, is, that there must be an end of ball-giving, and many other follies besides. The infernal tool who lent me above two hundred thousand pounds, has been sent for by his master before his time, obeyed the summons, died, and has left me to pay his executor instantly, I could as soon pay the national debt. To-morrow there will be an execution in the house."

Whilst Lady Latimer, breathing thick and painfully with the surprise, listened to this concise but sufficiently explanatory statement, a confused chaos of the favourite images of all she was about to lose, crowded into her mind. The matchless splendour of her universally admired equipage—the studied comforts of her crowded boudoir—the numberless varieties of her unrivalled wardrobe—the recente éclat of her much praised fête—and all the other incidental expenses which had always furnished so many opportunities for the exercise of her acknowledged taste—were for ever gone.

Lord Latimer continued: "If I had even had any ready money to keep them at bay—but this unlucky Derby has left me without a shilling at present."

When she heard this, her resolution was taken, and removing, one after another, her splendid diamonds from her neck and hair, she said, eagerly, "Would this, and this, and this, be of any use? If so, take them, and use them as you like."

"No, my dear, generous Louisa, upon no account would I think of that," said Lord Latimer, much touched with her liberal proposal; "besides, if for no other reason, it would avail nothing—they would be known at once, and the rumour of our distress would bring a hundred other harpies upon us. No, there is nothing for it, but to retire into the country together for a time."

"To Peatburn, I hope!" said Lady Latimer,—
"dear, Peatburn; if you would but go there with me again, I think I could almost reconcile myself to any thing. Say it shall be Peatburn," said she, hanging over him, and kissing his forehead.

"I think it would be rather cold at Peatburn as yet," said he, "but we will see about it. For the present, a friend, has lent me his villa at Wimbledon, where I mean to go to-morrow."

Accustomed, as Lord Latimer had long been, to think with indifference of his wife, it was impossible to view, entirely without emotion, that beautiful figure bending anxiously over him, and eagerly pressing upon his acceptance those splendid jewels which, within an hour, she had so highly prized as exciting the admiration of hundreds. Though the long dormant feeling which this sight revived, was not strong enough to make him jump at the idea of an immediate retreat to Peatburn Lodge, at the very commencement of a cold June, it nevertheless opened to him an unexpected source of consolation in his distresses.

Lord Latimer had been but too accurate in his prog-

nostics of the coming storm. His embarrassments once known, a torrent of unexpected claims broke in upon him. It was a few days after the conversation mentioned above, that Germain returned to town.—He had been engaged, almost ever since his last losses, upon a remote property of his, endeavouring to sell some land, and making the best arrangement he could of his affairs, and the most prompt settlement of the more pressing demands; for, though he never doubted the sincerity of Oakley's offer to accommodate him with any money he might want, yet he was very unwilling to lay himself under an obligation which he could not help fearing would not tend to the permanence of their friendship.

Upon arriving in London, as it was not till the evening that he could meet his man of business at his chambers, Germain strolled, as a matter of course, to Lord Latimer's house, not having heard what had happened. Raising his eyes instinctively to the windows, he was much amazed to see them stuck all over with bills, and the truth at once rushed upon his mind. The door was open: he entered without asking any question, and was met by a demand of a shilling for a catalogue. The sad reverse conveyed by this little incident struck him forcibly. The entrance within those walls had always been one of the few things which money could not purchase. Fashion, caprice, or prejudice, might all occasionally have exercised an undue influence in the choice of its inmates; but in vain would the man of mere wealth have attempted to edge in more than his card—and now a shilling's worth of catalogue laid it open to every one.

The doors were all placed a-jar, and he made his way, without impediment, straight to Lady Latimer's boudoir. "And here," thought he, "where hardly any were allowed to penetrate, and the favoured few who were, yielded so entirely to her powers of fascination, that criticism would have been impossible, and admiration unavoidable—here now must all

her little whims and fancies be exposed to the stupid stare, or contemptuous wonderment of the vulgar!"

The course of his meditations was interrupted by the free entrance, among others, of Captain and Mrs. Wilcox, who were both very busy with catalogues, and pencils, marking intended purchases. The captain addressed him.

"Pretty pickings here, sir, for those that have the ready. I am sorry though, that my lord should have smashed."

"I thought at first," said Mrs. Wilcox, "that they had huddled all the furniture of the house into this room, but I find that it was always so crowded."

"Her ladyship ought to have been the wife of an upholsterer," continued the captain.

"Poor lady! she certainly must have been very silly," exclaimed Mrs. Wilcox.

"And is it come to this," thought Germain, "that Lady Latimer should be the object of the contemptuous pity of Mrs. Captain Wilcox!"

"Oh, look here, Wilcox!" said the lady, "I must have this '*chaise long*,' as the French call it."

"Why, my dear, once down you'd never be able to get up again:" an apprehension which seemed not improbable, judging by the figure of his wife, at present not improved by temporary circumstances of a family nature.

"However," said Mrs. Wilcox, "I'll soon show you."

But Germain could not bear to remain to witness the experiment. It seemed little less than sacrilege to him, that Lady Latimer's own chair in her favourite corner, where her delicate form had so lately reposed, should be condemned to groan beneath the weight of Mrs. Wilcox.

Not a little distressed at the sad reverse he had

just unexpectedly witnessed, and to the misery of which his own difficulties made him peculiarly sensible, he hastened to quit the house, and hurried towards that part of the town where he was to find his lawyer.

CHAPTER XIV.

Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Biron,
Before I saw you; and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks,
Full of comparisons and winding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute,
That lie within the mercy of your wit.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was on the same day that Germain had been thus employed on his return to town, that Oakley was dining alone in the coffee-room of — Club. The time of probation fixed by Helen had almost expired, and he ventured to look forward to the immediate reward of his patience.

There was another table laid for three in another part of the room, but those who were expected to occupy it had not arrived when he began his solitary meal. His back was turned towards the table, and their entrance taking place during a pause in his own dinner, when he was agreeably anticipating his future prospects, and apparently occupied with the evening paper, he did not turn round to remark who came in.

They talked in rather an under-tone, but with that quick ear which one has for his own name, he thought he heard his repeated in a whisper, and presently after, in the same voice, that of Miss Mordaunt. He turned hastily round, and opposite to him, sitting between two other gentlemen, he beheld Fitzalbert, and, as he fancied, with the same intolerably insolent expression of countenance which had disgusted him at Germain's. He longed immediately and openly to

notice it, but the mere mention of a name presented no tangible ground of offence.

Sir Gregory Greenford was one of Fitzalbert's companions; the other was an officer on the eve of departure to join his regiment in Portugal. They now conversed together in a louder tone, and the subject was Germain and his losses. Fitzalbert spoke slightly of him, and mentioned rather boastfully the sums he had himself won of him in the course of the year.

Oakley could bear this no longer, and turning round, said: "I believe, Mr. Fitzalbert, you consider yourself as much Germain's friend as I am; but my idea of that character would be rather to relieve his distress than to ruin him first, and ridicule him afterwards."

This was in itself not an over-conciliatory address, and Oakley had condensed into his delivery of it all his long-suppressed dislike of Fitzalbert, who, on his side, answered very coolly:

"The very natural distinction between having more money than you know how to spend, and spending more money than you know how to get."

He then continued talking on the same subject to his two companions, saying; "As to Germain, no Mentor could have saved him six months; I never saw any one so devotedly determined to lose."

"Better to lose like Germain, than win like some others!" audibly ejaculated Oakley: but at the same moment the waiter was asking Fitzalbert's orders as to what claret he would choose. He therefore did not catch the words, and here the matter might have rested, but for Sir Gregory Greenford, who furnished another proof that a fool is the surest mischief-maker, by saying to the military gentleman: "That's meant as a cut at Fitz, I think."

The Military gentleman looked grim, and shook his head. Fitzalbert's attention was thus called to what had passed, and he turned towards Oakley: "If

you did me the honour to address any thing further to me, Mr. Oakley," said he, "I have to regret that the more interesting occupation of choosing my claret prevented my hearing it. I am now perfectly at leisure."

"I don't feel myself bound to repeat what you found it convenient not to hear."

"If you mean that I myself should have regarded it as not of the slightest consequence, you are quite right; but as those gentlemen seem to attach some importance to it, I must request Sir Gregory to tell me what it was you said, and then I shall know whether it is worth my while to require you either to repeat or retract it."

Sir Gregory gave it word for word, and so repeated, it certainly seemed to convey an insinuation which might have been missed when originally spoken. Fitzalbert's cheek reddened with indignation at the idea of being suspected of foul play of which he was quite incapable, though sufficiently ready to avail himself of what are called "fair advantages."

"Mr. Oakley," said he, "your words certainly mean to impute something to somebody, as even you I suppose, are not Utopian enough to conceive the mere act of winning to any amount, worse than losing independent of some disgrace attached to the manner of doing so. As this sentiment followed immediately after a lecture on friendship with which you were kind enough to favour me, I feel myself bound to ask, what under other circumstances I certainly should not have conceived possible, whether you meant any allusion to me?"

"I stated my opinion generally; you may apply it particularly where you know it to be best deserved."

"Excuse me, sir; it is not a riddle you have given me to guess, but an accusation you have hazarded; and either to support or retract it, since you have presumed to call my character in question, you must be now prepared."

"I am not prepared to think such a subject worth any further trouble," replied Oakley.

There was much in all this, and in what followed, like what occurs in most quarrels of a similar description, which both parties would have been at once ashamed and surprised at, had it been shown to them in writing on the following morning, and which is therefore very little worth commemorating. It is sufficient to state, that it led to the application of words which are rarely uttered, and still more rarely retracted. The inevitable result must have been guessed. A meeting was arranged for the next morning, and in this instance the time and place were rather unusually fixed by the two principals, who felt too much mutual animosity to allow the intervention of any other parties to delay the settlement of so important a point.

Fitzalbert immediately despatched a note to Lord Latimer, desiring to see him on particular business, without mentioning what it was. The military friend, who had dined with him, was to set out that very night to join his regiment in Portugal; and Fitzalbert was not at all desirous to trust the arrangement of so serious an affair to Sir Gregory Greenford.

Oakley, on his part, his habits being little gregarious, was rather at a loss for a second, even had he been aware of Germain's return to London; and his having been innocently enough the cause of the immediate quarrel would have put him out of the question. He accidentally met a casual House of Commons acquaintance in the streets, and not having any one with whom he was more intimate, to whom he could apply, he asked and obtained of him a promise to accompany him in the morning to Wimbledon.

When Lord Latimer received Fitzalbert's note, he hastened up to town immediately, and repaired straight to the Club, where he found his friend still awaiting him. Upon its being mentioned to him with whom the quarrel was, he at first positively declined having any thing to do with it, and that he

said, for reasons of a private nature which had been mentioned to him in confidence that day, but which had no reference whatever to Fitzalbert.

"But," said Fitzalbert, "hear at least the whole case, and then say, whether you think I am in a situation in which you are prepared to desert me."

When the quarrel was detailed to Lord Latimer from the beginning, the unprovoked nature of the attack inferred from Oakley's words by Fitzalbert, and the odious imputation upon his honour which had been first insinuated and afterwards maintained, was fairly submitted to his consideration, he shook his head, and said, "Certainly no concession can originate with you." After thinking a little, he continued: "And you are really anxious that I should be your second in this affair?"

"I consider it as of the highest possible importance. I told Greenford, who was present at the time, that I had written to you for that purpose, and should you decline, the most disadvantageous constructions will be put upon my conduct."

"Well," said Lord Latimer, "allow me but another hour to act as a free agent on my own account, and then, if you still require me, of course I will not disappoint you."

It was with a heavy heart, and very faint hopes of success, that Lord Latimer went direct from the Club to Oakley's house."

Since the Latimers had retired to their friend's villa at Wimbledon, they had of course been much alone, and habits of confidence had revived between them. Within the last two days, they had been joined by Helen. Lady Latimer felt it impossible to conceal from her husband the delight she felt at the happy prospects of her friend; and she obtained permission to communicate them at once to him, particularly as this seemed to be a very good opportunity for at once putting an end to the foolish coolness between him and Oakley, which had continued ever since the election.

Lord Latimer was delighted with what he heard;

for even amidst so many other pursuits he had not been before insensible to Helen's merits, and the good sense and good feeling which she showed in her conversations with Lady Latimer on the subject of their present distresses had confirmed his former very favourable impression. He therefore had, that very evening, readily undertaken, at Lady Latimer's request, to ride up on the morrow, the day of the expiration of Helen's mourning, to London, to extend a friendly hand to Oakley, and bring him down with him to see his betrothed bride, a distinction which, they none of them doubted, would at once make Oakley forget any soreness he might once have felt towards a now-welcome ambassador.

As Lord Latimer slowly walked towards Oakley's, in vain endeavouring to make up his mind as to how he was to execute the difficult task with which he had charged himself, the sad contrast between his present business, and the happy mission on which he expected to have been sent, oppressed him heavily, and of the still more melancholy catastrophe to which it might lead he could not bear to think.

CHAPTER XV.

I thank you, gracious lord,
For all your fair endeavours; and entreat
Out of a new-sad soul, that you vouchsafe
In your rich wisdom, to excuse, or hide
The liberal opposition of my spirits,
If over-boldly I have borne myself
In the converse of breath.

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD LATIMER had much difficulty in obtaining admittance to Oakley. The servants said that their master had returned home, but had retired to his library, and given directions that he should not be disturbed. However, upon Lord Latimer's insisting that they should take in his name, this was at length done; and very shortly afterwards he was ushered into the library—a long, low, gloomy-looking apartment, at one end of which Oakley was seated, busily engaged in writing. He rose to receive Lord Latimer, and, motioning him to a chair, said: "I presume, my lord, that you come on the part of Mr. Fitzalbert—if so, and there is any thing else to arrange, you will oblige me by communicating with my friend, Mr. Sandford."

"You mistake: it is on my own part I come, and it is with yourself that I wish to communicate."

"I own you surprise me: perhaps then some other time will answer your purpose: at present I am engaged on very particular business."

"It is on that very business that I wish to speak to you."

"That can hardly be—uninvited by me, unauthorized by the other party——"

"My character," said Lord Latimer, avoiding a direct answer, "does not often lead me to undertake the management of other people's concerns; on the contrary, I oftener neglect even my own; but, at the risk of being reckoned officious, I cannot allow this affair to proceed further without doing my utmost to prevent it. It is a very foolish business, Mr. Oakley."

"Allow me to ask you, my lord, from whom you have derived the account of this foolish business?"

"From Mr. Fitzalbert."

"Then you can hardly expect me to agree with you in an opinion of it which you derive from such a source."

"You have not lived much in the world, Mr. Oakley; I have; and nobody who knows me will suspect that if I thought your honour at all concerned in the prosecution of this affair, I would put any impediment in the way of it; rather would I do all in my power to bring it as speedily as possible to its inevitable conclusion: but I cannot think it necessary that you should bind yourself down to maintain a few hasty words spoken in a moment of irritation, and probably without very accurately weighing their import."

"But this is not exactly the case. Circumstances led me irresistibly to give my real opinion of Mr. Fitzalbert. It is not often in the intercourse of society that one is called to do so of any man; but having chosen to avail myself of an opportunity in this instance, I certainly shall not retract it. And having said thus much, I think, my lord, it cannot be unexpected by you, if I ask what has so suddenly given your lordship an interest in my concerns?"

"I thought you might have guessed the source of that interest, which undoubtedly must otherwise appear extraordinary. Lady Latimer has a friend, Mr. Oakley, at present staying with us, on whose account I hoped to-morrow to have seen you on a different footing, having been deputed to announce to you the

termination of her mourning. If you ask what it is that brings me here now, it is anxiety for her happiness, which I would not see wantonly hazarded."

"That is a part of the subject on which I have endeavoured to avoid thinking," said Oakley after a deep sigh.

"And why so? Were the quarrel unavoidable, I should be the last person to bring forward this or any other topic which might unman you; But I cannot endure that rather than own yourself in the wrong, when you most undoubtedly are so; you should run the risk of rendering her miserable for life, who has already had sorrow enough."

Lord Latimer stopped—and there was a long pause of anxious expectation on his part, and an evident agitation on that of Oakley, who, at length, in a softened tone inquired: "What then is the course which you recommend?"

"It is a state of things which appears to me to offer no alternative: the same line of conduct which if I was already acting for Fitzalbert, as I perhaps shall be, I should then deem satisfactory to him, is the only one which, in sincere goodwill, I should recommend to you to adopt—to disclaim most distinctly any allusion to him in the discreditable insinuations you let fall, and to apologize for those hasty expressions which afterwards gave a colour to such an application of your words."

"That is quite out of the question!" Oakley warmly exclaimed; "humble myself before him?—Never?"

"It is certainly not pleasant to own one's self in the wrong, but it is better than to continue so knowing and not acknowledging it. The fault originated with you."

"But I do not consider myself to have been in the wrong. What I said of Fitzalbert is what I really think."

"On what grounds do you rest that opinion? Have you any proofs?"

"Proofs?—not perhaps any positive facts—but be-

sides the enormous sums lost by Germain within a year, of which Fitzalbert has won by much the largest portion——”

“That will not do,” interrupted Lord Latimer, provoked at Oakley’s attempting to draw an inference which he thought so monstrous; “you yourself must perceive at once there is no argument in that.”

“Well, perhaps not. I do not mean to insist upon it; but to come to the point at once—whether I was thoroughly justified in saying what I did without some proof which I could bring forward, it is now useless to discuss. Confirmed and credited or not, my opinion still remains the same; and to say that I did not mean Mr. Fitzalbert in what I said, is a falsehood to which I never will stoop, and therefore——”

“One moment—will it alter your opinion, and consequently your conduct, if I state to you, that having known Fitzalbert all my life as fond of play and generally successful, I give you my honour I believe him to be incapable of any thing ungentlemanlike?”

“That is a point to which I had rather not discuss with you. It is a test by which you must excuse me if I decline to try my opinion. It is sufficient that if I were to attempt to say I did not mean any attack upon Fitzalbert, my look would belie my words, and I should degrade myself without being believed. This being the case, I have only to return you my most sincere thanks for your kind intentions, reminding you at the same time that there can be no use in pressing the matter further.”

At this hint Lord Latimer slowly and unwillingly rose to depart, saying: “I am very sorry, Mr. Oakley, that we part thus: when next we meet I shall probably be employed by Fitzalbert. I would enter into no engagement till I had endeavoured to accommodate matters on my own responsibility. Having failed in this, and feeling that Fitzalbert has been subjected by you to odious imputations upon his character, which I utterly disbelieve, I cannot, without gross injustice, refuse to accompany him. When

there, it will be my endeavour to keep the door open for accommodation to the last moment, hoping that you may see reason to alter your unfortunate determination; and then I shall accept that as satisfactory to Fitzalbert, which I beg leave earnestly to repeat to you as the best advice I can give as a gentleman and a man of the world." Oakley shook his head, but parted with Lord Latimer with more cordiality than an hour before he would have thought it possible he could have felt towards him.

When Lord Latimer returned to the Club, he communicated to Fitzalbert his vain attempt to bring Oakley to reason, without, however, dwelling fully upon the obstinacy he had shown. "Oh!" said Fitzalbert, "I don't desire the man's life; only let him make me an explicit apology before Sir Gregory Greenford, who was present, and write by the first Lisbon mail to my friend, the major, who is off for Portugal, to say that he has done so, and I am satisfied; but he must unsay every word of it, or by the powers that made him, I shall certainly shoot him!"

Lord Latimer shuddered as he recollected the consummate skill of the person who said this.

When Oakley was left to himself, it was in vain that he endeavoured to banish from his mind those considerations which had been pressed upon his attention by Lord Latimer. His attempts to do so were considerably impeded by his finding it impossible even to satisfy himself with his own conduct in the affair. He had been so long accustomed to view Fitzalbert personally with dislike, and to think of his character with distrust, that in his own opinion he had set him down as little better than a sharper. But in vain he now attempted to fix upon any ostensible grounds for such an imputation—and was he to risk his own life, and attempt that of his adversary, in the obstinate support of a mere suspicion? This was a state of things to which he could not look forward with satisfaction, and yet the alternative was one which he could never adopt—to be forced to as-

sert that he meant no allusion to Fitzalbert in those insinuations which he felt that those who had heard him must still remain convinced could bear no other construction, and which, had they been in themselves doubtful, had been rendered more obvious by the angry altercation which followed. And was he then to submit to be branded in the eyes of the world as one who had maliciously hazarded groundless accusations, and afterwards wanted courage to support them?

This last consideration was conclusive; and though he could not contemplate the situation in which he had placed himself without some self reproach, as well as uneasiness, he no longer had any doubts as to the inevitable course he must pursue.

Neither of the principals passed so restless a night as Lord Latimer. He could not at all combat his melancholy forebodings as to how different a day the morrow might prove to those he had left behind at Wimbledon, from that which they fondly anticipated. His mind always required some object of interest to occupy it: and during his present pecuniary difficulties, and his consequent retirement from those gay scenes whose excitement had always been at his command, his attention had been much engrossed by the unexpected prospects of Helen, for whom he felt a sincere regard.

When he received Fitzalbert's note, guessing the sort of business on which he was summoned, he had made his own affairs, at that time naturally requiring much of his attention, an excuse for going to town stating that he should not return till the morning.

"And then mind" said Lady Latimer, "I shall not forgive you unless you bring Mr. Oakley back with you." Helen said nothing; but the expression of her countenance as Lady Latimer said this, still recurred to him every time he attempted to compose himself to sleep.

Wimbledon Common had been mentioned between Oakley and Fitzalbert, as the appointed place of meet-

ing. Heavily the morning dawned which was to light them on their cheerless way. The air was cold and chill, and a fog, unusually thick for the time of year, gathered round their carriages, and almost impeded their progress. Little communication passed between Oakley and Mr. Sandford. The latter was always rather afraid of Oakley; and embarrassed at the task he had undertaken, which he had only accepted from not knowing how to refuse, and which Oakley would never have asked of him but from accidentally meeting him, and not knowing how, at such short notice, to procure another second.

Fitzalbert was much more amusing than Lord Latimer, yet the flow of his fun was not so natural as usual; for, even to the coolest, it is no exhilarating destination. "The last time I was up at this unconscionable hour it was just such another foggy morning. I was at your place then, by the by—Peatburn. It rather interfered with my *shooting* then too."

Lord Latimer not making any attempt to muster even a smile at this misplaced pleasantry, Fitzalbert relapsed into silence, and occupied himself in watching the progress of the fog, which slowly rolled away as they approached the higher ground to which they were bound. Arrived there, both parties left their carriages, and proceeded on foot to a more retired part of the heath. As Fitzalbert strode on before, Lord Latimer stopped a little for Oakley, who was following with Mr. Sandford, and once more addressed him. "I wish you would allow me to think Mr. Oakley, that you have better considered what I suggested last night. It is not by any means too late.

"Any thing that you may have now to communicate to me, my lord, had better be addressed through my friend, Mr. Sandford; but if he makes any appeal to me, I should certainly say that I did not come here to be bullied, and that any interruption, or hesitation,

at this moment, unless on some fresh ground, must certainly have that appearance.

Lord Latimer looked at Mr. Sandford, but he could see no attempt, on his part, at any opening for further negotiation, and as they had now reached the ground, he could only hope that, after the first fire, the renewed attempts he then determined to make at explanation, might be more successful, as the idea of misconstruction, as to his motives, which seemed to influence Oakley's conduct, would then no longer have the same weight.

Fitzalbert had been led to expect, from what Lord Latimer told him the evening before, that Oakley, in his cooler moments, would see the unjustifiable nature of the imputations he had ventured, and he was therefore more exasperated at the obstinacy with which he appeared now to defend them.

It was arranged by Lord Latimer, with the concurrence of his coadjutor, that to avoid premeditation, the parties should not face each other till a given signal—that they should then immediately level their pistols and fire.

At the given signal, Oakley turned round, and stretched forth his arm steadily, but with what accuracy of aim was never known. Fitzalbert, upon facing his adversary, raised his hand with apparent carelessness, but, as it proved, with too fatal precision, for almost within the same second of time in which the instrument of death reached the level of his unerring eye, Oakley staggered and fell.

All the parties, among whom was a surgeon, who had been brought down on purpose, hastened to his assistance. As soon as Oakley could speak, the first person he addressed was Fitzalbert.

"You had better go—I feel you had—but first, before these gentlemen—you could do no otherwise than you did. The blame was entirely my own—most heartily do I forgive you."

It was some time before the medical gentleman

thought it safe to move Oakley at all, as the ball appeared to be in the immediate neighbourhood of the lungs; but when a litter was procured, as it was highly important that he should be carried as short a distance as possible, they attempted to remove him to Lord Latimer's villa at Wimbledon.

CHAPTER XVI.

Speak, is't so?

If it be so, you have wound a goodly clue;
If it be not, forswear't; howe'er, I charge thee,
As heaven shall work in me for mine avail,
To tell me truly.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY LATIMER and Helen had that morning, after breakfast, been talking over the future prospects of the latter.

"I only hope, my dear Helen," said Lady Latimer, "that you may be as happy as you deserve to be. The doubts I have expressed as to some parts of Mr. Oakley's character, have only been stated that you might early correct their evil tendency, not from any desire to take from the value of your very promising prospects; and now, having said thus much, for my letter-writing; for before post-time, I trust, one may announce it as certain."

Soon after Lady Latimer had retired at one door, Lord Latimer came in at the other. Helen's back was turned towards him, and he advanced hastily to her, evidently mistaking her for Lady Latimer; for, upon perceiving who it was, he shrunk back with an expression which did not escape her observation, and immediately conveyed a foreboding of some evil tidings to her.

"Where is he?—will he not come?" she abruptly inquired; though it was the first time that the subject of Oakley had escaped her lips to the ears of Lord Latimer.

In the course of a complicated intercourse with the world, Lord Latimer had, of course, often been placed in situations of embarrassment and difficulty, but he had never felt so unequal to any thing, as to the painful task of having to break to the interesting orphan-girl before him the sudden overthrow—the utter extinction—of all her fond hopes and brilliant expectations. He could only stammer out: “He is, I believe in the house.”

“Where? Why not here?” she anxiously asked.

“He is hurt—rather—I fear; but, I trust, not very much.”

A servant came in, whose manner was evidently confused and disturbed, and before Lord Latimer could motion him to silence, he said: “The doctor, my lord, must see you again immediately.”

Lord Latimer could not but feel partially relieved by this momentary escape from his difficult duty.—He said: “I will return immediately, Miss Mordaunt, and you shall know all—but compose yourself—I trust there is still hope,”—and he hastily left the room.”

“Hope!” cried Helen, bewildered. “Good God! what has happened?”

The idea that first suggested itself was of a fall from his horse, or some other accident in coming down; for that there should have been a quarrel—a duel—and yet that he should be there, was an idea that with no apparent probability could have presented itself. A few moments she waited Lord Latimer’s return in a state of trembling anxiety, when, no longer able to bear the agonising suspense, she staggered to the stairs. At the head of the first flight there was a half-open door, through which she fancied she heard Lord Latimer’s voice in low and earnest conversation. She succeeded in reaching that door. It opened into a dressing-room, but there was no longer any one in it. Opposite to that, through which she had entered, there was another door closed—they must have disappeared through that—and

Oakley must be there. Endeavouring to compose her scattered spirits, she retired to the open window, gasping for breath, and overcome with apprehension. Whilst she remained here, half hid by the falling curtains, Lord Latimer and the surgeon came through from the inner room without seeing her.

"No hope, my lord, no hope!" said the medical man: "he may linger a few hours longer; but he is mortally wounded."

"Poor Helen!" said Lord Latimer, and they passed on.

She made an attempt to stop them, and inquire further, but the words died away on her lips. She then determined to enter Oakley's apartment, and with her own eyes learn the worst; a moment of irresolution and maiden modesty succeeded. "This is no time for such considerations," thought she. Endeavouring to gather strength for this great effort, she leant, in passing, against the back of an arm-chair, when, with freezing horror, she perceived that one side of it was wet with blood. Revolting from thence, her eye wandered unconsciously to the table, where the pistols had been carelessly thrown, and the whole dreadful catastrophe rushed at once upon her mind.

When, by the exertion of the most extraordinary self-command, she had so far recovered as to attempt entering Oakley's room, she beheld him stretched on the bed, his eyes half closed, his countenance, which was naturally pale, but little altered. She glided in so softly, that he was not at first conscious of her entrance. She dropped gently on her knees by the side of his bed, and taking his hand in hers, bathed it with her tears.

"Helen, sweet Helen!" murmured Oakley, and words of comfort were rising to his lips; but when he looked at the orphan-girl, and recollected that he was all in all to her, the half-formed phrase of consolation choked him, as he felt that such attempt would be a mockery to the desolation of her heart, and he

could only feebly and indistinctly repeat: "Poor—poor Helen!"

He never spoke more: and when Lord Latimer, a few minutes afterwards, entered the apartment, having, in vain, sought Helen elsewhere, he found her senseless on the dead body of her lover; and when returning consciousness brought a knowledge of the events that had blasted her happiness for ever, the distraction that followed, rendered her recovery from that death-like swoon, a thing which it was doubtful whether her friends durst rejoice at.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

Our revels now are ended; these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air.

SHAKESPEARE.

By Oakley's will, which bore the date of the evening before the duel, and in framing which, he had been engaged when visited by Lord Latimer, his immense property was divided between Helen and Germain. To Miss Mordaunt, was left Rockington Castle, (where his interview with her father had taken place,) and all his other detached property of every description. To Germain he bequeathed, with many kind expressions of regard, the fine estate of Goldsborough Park and its appendages.

After a time, Helen retired to Rockington Castle where she soon found ample employment of a tranquil nature, best suited to the state of her feelings, in restoring the deserted dwellings, which now disfigured that property, to their former cheerful condition; and it was not long before she felt to a certain degree consoled, in the active exercise of that Christian charity and universal benevolence, which brought with it its own reward, in the striking contrast it furnished to the withering influence of her father's misanthropy.

Fitzalbert had hurried abroad the very morning of the duel, and returned, after a time, much changed in character and sobered in spirits, by the sad remem-

brance which, in spite of every effort to suppress it, would rise again every day, almost every hour,—that he had deprived a fellow-creature of life.

Lady Flamborough remarked, even during the very first days when people were still talking of the duel, that, in spite of all his foibles, Germain had always been her favourite. Need it be added, that she had been the first to learn the settlement of the Goldsborough Park estate?

Fortune seemed at this time to favour all her ladyship's schemes; for Sir Gregory at length made up his mighty mind to propose to Lady Caroline. It need hardly be added that he obtained the lady, though he did not at the same time obtain her fortune of ten thousand pounds, which he was obliged to transfer to his new brother-in-law, Lord Latimer. For though his lordship had been obliged to sell off all his stud, yet in other hands, the yearling colt, against which Sir Gregory had so rashly not only hazarded an opinion, but betted ten thousand pounds won the produce stakes in a capter—and this windfall was very welcome to Lord Latimer, who was at the time economising abroad.

Mr. and Lady Jane Germain retired to Goldsborough Park for the honeymoon, and afterwards passed much of their time at that delightful place. If there was any drawback to Germain's enjoyment of it, it certainly arose from the unfortunate propinquity of Wilcox House. He was but too often in the habit of seeing in the person of the idol of his boyish fancy, the mistress of that mansion, a perpetual memento of the fallibility of human taste. However, he managed so far to outlive his feelings on this subject, as to go very satisfactorily through the duties of neighbourhood; and at the annual dinner, there, to which he and Lady Jane were always invited, he regularly availed himself, as a signal for their departure, of the moment when Mrs. Wilcox (no longer able, even in honour of her guests, to resist her daily afternoon doze) was stretched at full length on the

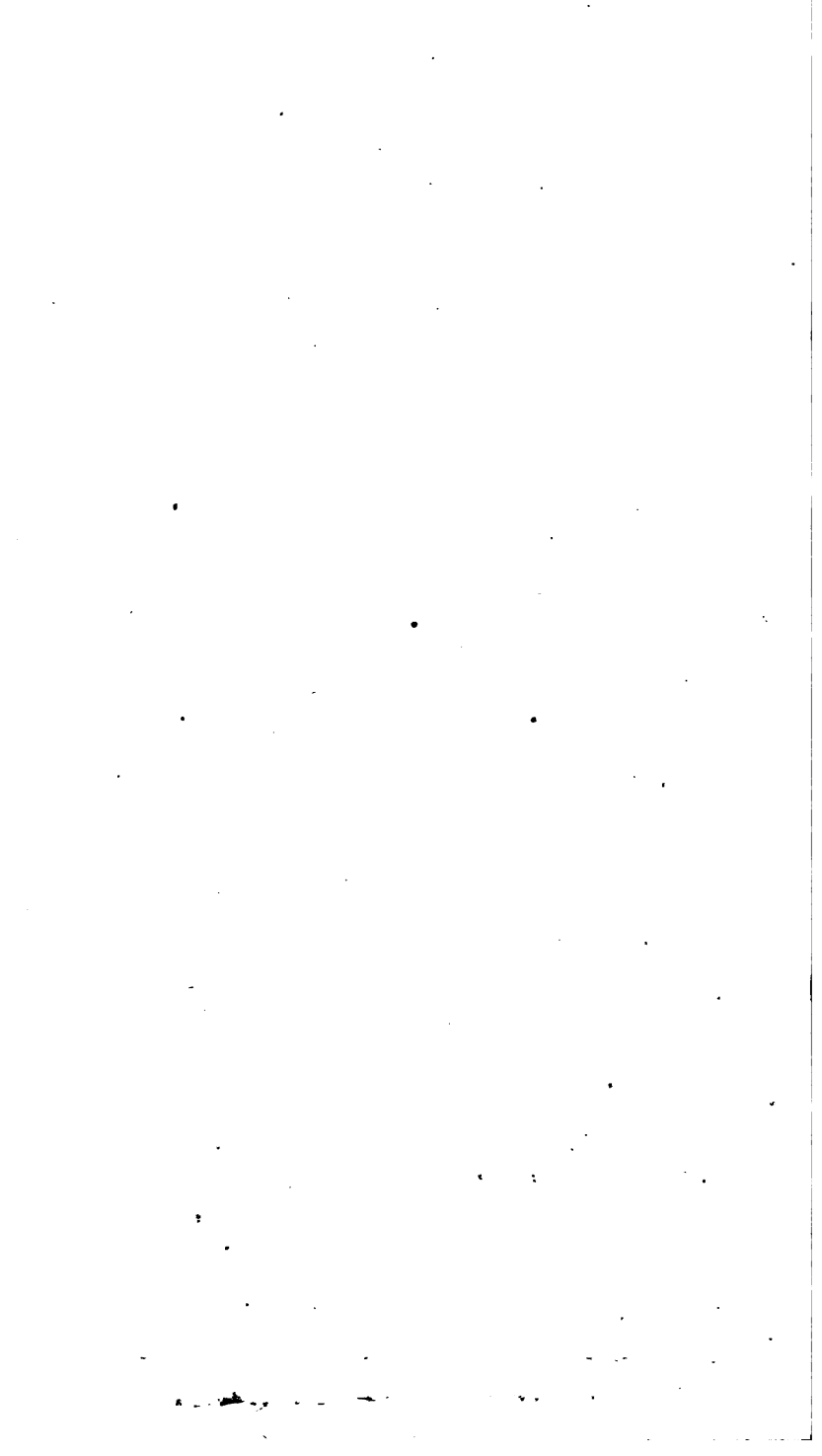
identical *fauteuil* which she had purchased at Lady Latimer's sale.

The political changes which have lately occurred, have made Lady Boreton asquiesce very readily in Germain's continuing a member for the county, as there no longer exists any substantial difference between them.

In domestic affairs, if Germain has not yet learned to think for himself, he at least allows Lady Jane the exclusive privilege of thinking for him—a custom in which he is countenanced by many more worthy men than would choose to acknowledge it: and by whatever private arrangement such a happy result is produced, it is undoubtedly to be desired, that those who are to pass their lives together, should somehow concur in the suitable and timely alternate application of those two most important monosyllables—

YES AND NO.

THE END.



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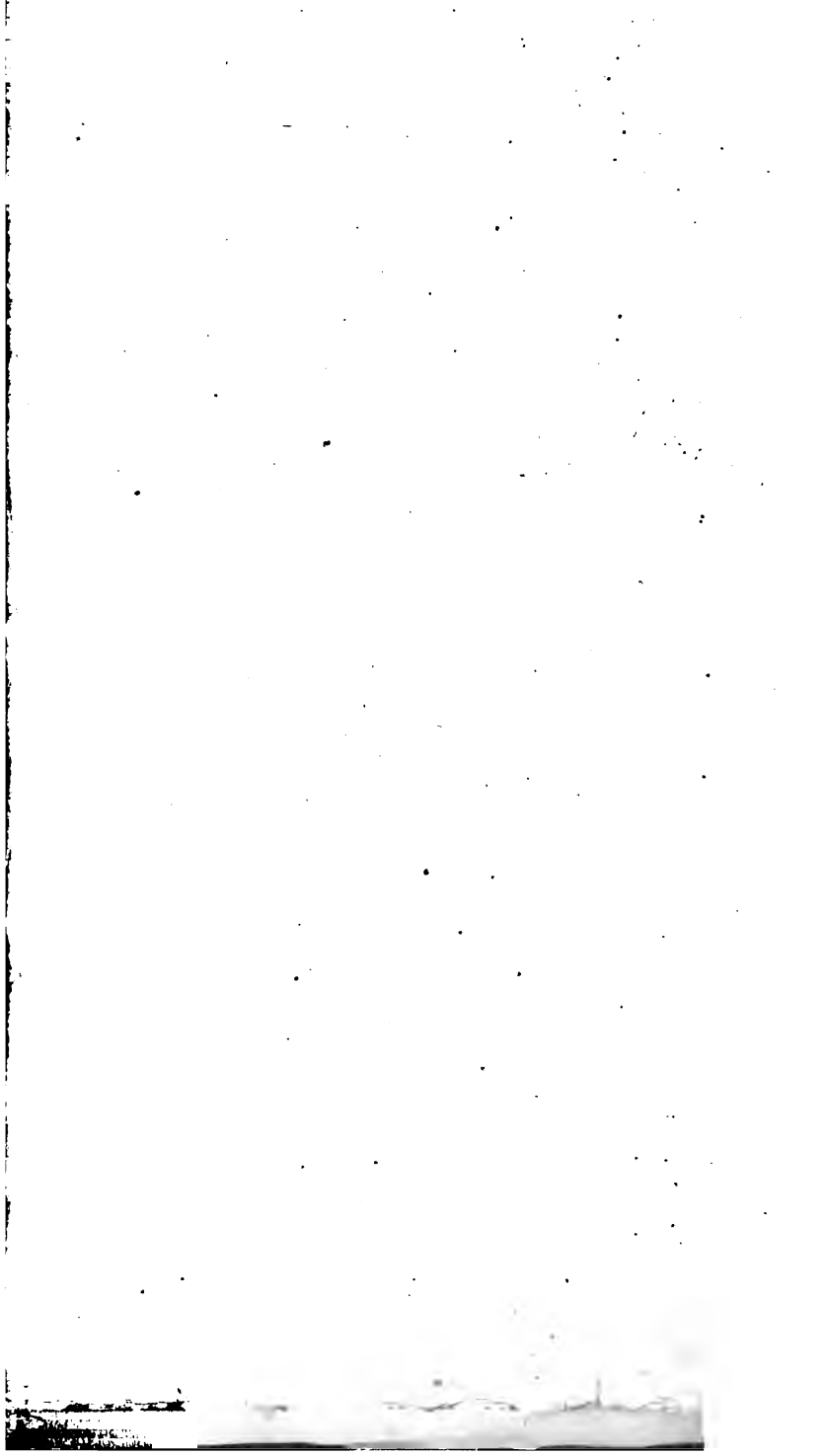
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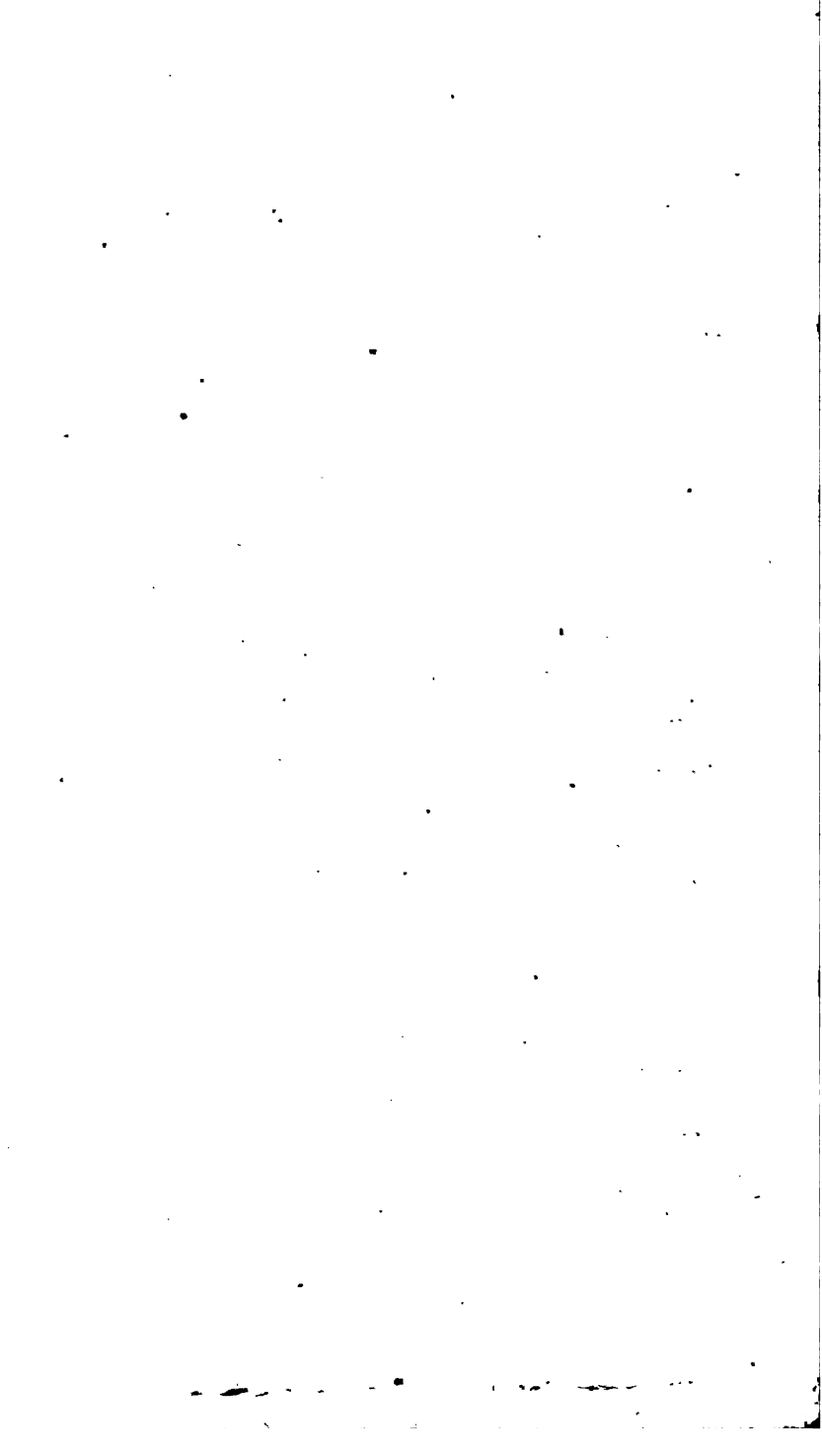
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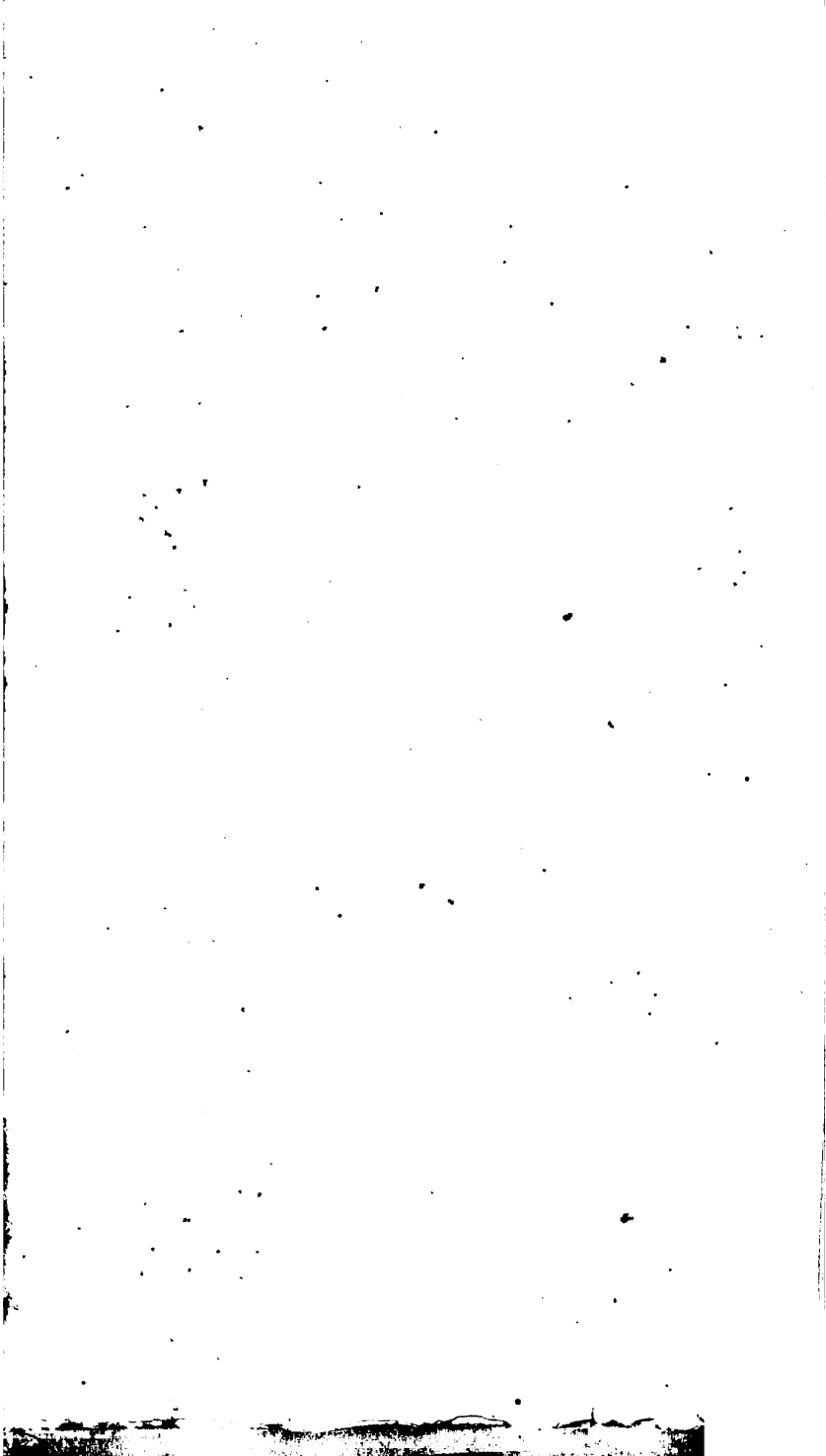
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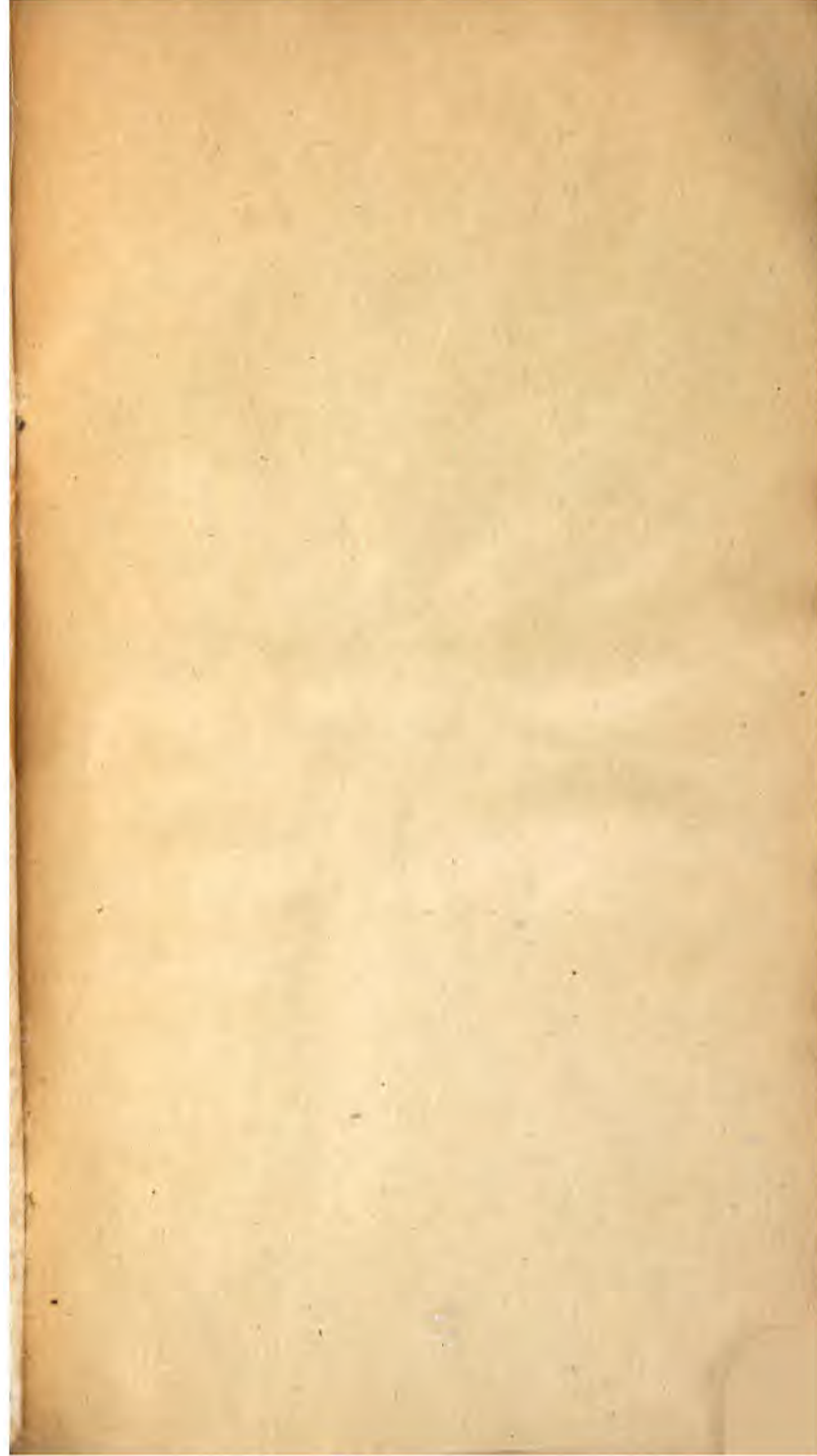
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